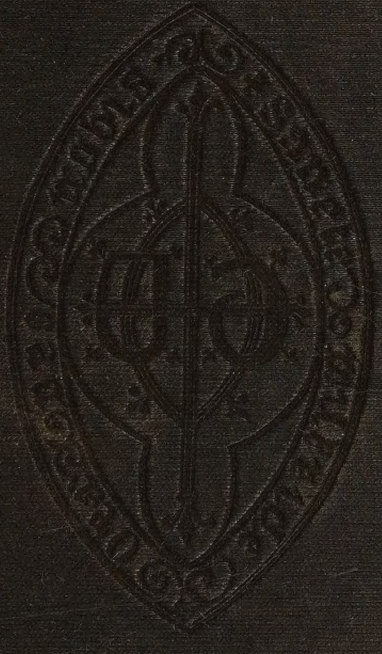

FF. PRÆDICATORUM,
BENITIÆ.
No. 922/a

Lives of the Canonized Saints.

The Congregation of the Oratory is now enabled to take upon itself and to continue the Series of Lives of Saints, which was begun some time since by the Rev. Father Faber, and has lately been suspended.

The Fathers have never yet been formally responsible for that Series; their connexion with it being limited to the accident that, when it was already in course of publication, its Editor joined their body. On taking this step, the Editor felt, as they did, that some new arrangement was required by the altered position in which he stood, and that either they must take his work upon themselves, or he must bring it to a close. They postponed the determination of so important a question to the end of the current year; when, by accidental coincidence, a strong opposition to the Series manifested itself in one quarter of the English Catholic body, resting for support, as was supposed, on venerable names, which necessarily commanded their most serious attention and deference. Anxious not to involve the Congregation in a party contest at the commencement of its course, the Fathers forthwith came to the decision of not committing themselves to the publication for the present; and in consequence recommended the Editor to suspend it.

It is both a surprise and a great consolation, and they give thanks and praise to the Father of mercies, and to the intercession of the Saints, whose Lives were the subject in dispute, that they are enabled, after so short an interval, with the kind wishes of their ecclesiastical superiors,

of the heads of Colleges and Religious bodies, and of all generally whose good opinion they covet, and by whose judgment they desire to be guided, nay, at the express instance of those parties who had been foremost in the opposition, to take upon themselves a responsibility, from which, without such general countenance and encouragement, they felt themselves justified in shrinking. And they hope they may without presumption accept it in some sort as a reward for the readiness with which they gave up their own wishes to the claims of christian charity and peace, that the very suspension of the Series has been the means of eliciting an expression of sympathy towards themselves and it, so cordial and unanimous, and testimonies to the good it was effecting so decisive, as to allow of their undertaking it consistently with the edification of their brethren, and with comfort to themselves.

Accordingly they propose in the ensuing August, when the last volume promised by F. Faber is to be published, to transfer the Editorship from him to themselves; and meanwhile they earnestly beg of the good friends who have given them so zealous a support, to assist them also with their prayers, that they may continue his important work with that wisdom and discretion which become the glorious Saints to whose honour it is dedicated.

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VOL. III.

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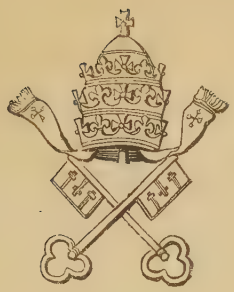

We hereby approve of this Series of Lives of the Canonized Saints and Servants of God, and recommend it to the faithful of our District, as likely to promote the glory of God, the increase of devotion, and the spread of our holy Religion.

Given at Birmingham, this 29th day of October, 1847.

Thomas
Bishop of Comboosopolis

Nicholas
Bishop of Melipotamus

Dec 1951

TO

THE REGULAR CLERGY

OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND,

THE CHILDREN

OF ST. BENEDICT AND ST. BERNARD,

ST. DOMINICK AND ST. FRANCIS,

AND THE SONS

OF THE HOLY IGNATIUS,

THE GREAT MASTER OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE,

AND THE NURSING-FATHER OF SAINTS AND MARTYRS,

WHO,

IN THE STRAITNESS AND NEGLECT

OF THEIR UNHONOURED CLOISTERS,

OR THE CHEERLESS SOLITUDE

OF THEIR HIRED LODGING,

HAVE JOYFULLY EMBRACED THE POVERTY OF JESUS,

AND EARNED BY LOVING ZEAL

THE CROWN OF MARTYRDOM,

AND WHO,

THROUGH SCENES OF AWFUL SACRILEGE,

AND TIMES OF BITTER PERSECUTION,

THROUGH THE LONG AND WEARY VISITATION

OF ACTIVE MALICE OR OF COLD CONTEMPT,

HAVE PERPETUATED,

AMONGST THEIR UNWORTHY COUNTRYMEN,

THE BLESSED LINEAGE

OF THEIR HOLY FOUNDERS.

St. Wilfrid's,
Feast of St. Bernard,
M. DCCC. XLVII.

PREFACE.

In consequence of the circular issued by the Fathers of the Oratory in the last volume of the Series, the following arrangements have been made in order to complete what has been begun by August next, when the Congregation takes the responsibility of the Series upon itself. The second and concluding volume of St. Ignatius will be published on the 24th of April.

The fourth volume of St. Alphonso, with an Introduction by the Very Rev. Father De Held, Provincial of the Redemptorists in England, will appear on the 24th of June.

The fifth and concluding volume of St. Alphonso will be published on the 24th of August; and as the appendix of Tannoja, containing the notices of St. Alphonso's first companions, cannot be compressed into the five volumes of the Saint's Life, it will be issued separately, either with the June or August volume,

in lieu of the extra volume which was to have appeared according to advertisement last Christmas, but which circumstances prevented.

As many have complained lately of the delay of Benedict XIV. on Heroic Virtue, it may be as well to say that, although no date can yet be fixed for its appearance, because of the laborious character of the work, yet there is every probability that a volume will be ready for the press in two or three months from this time.

F. W. Faber,
Priest of the Oratory.

St. Wilfrid's,
Conversion of St. Paul, 1849.

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THE LIFE

OF

ST. ALPHONSO LIGUORI.

BOOK III. CONTINUED.

CHAPTER XVI.

NOTWITHSTANDING the numerous cares which accompanied Alphonso's zeal and devotion for the salvation of his flock, he did not give up being interested about his brother's family. Don Hercules became a widower about this time, (1763) by the death of Donna Rachel Liguori; as he had no heir, he resolved to enter into a second marriage. To obtain the blessing of Heaven on the execution of this design, he imparted it to Alphonso, and asked him to aid him by his prayers and by saying several masses for his intention.

"This morning," Alphonso replied, the 5th of November, 1763, "I celebrated mass a second time for Donna Rachel at the special altar; tomorrow and the day after, or at latest next week, I shall say two masses for you, that God may dispose things in the most advantageous way for your soul." Speaking afterwards on the

projected marriage, he added, "I beg of you to be very careful to choose a young woman of moral habits, not a vain person, or one who would be disposed to take advantage of your advanced age. If she is young and wishes to live always at Naples and to frequent soirées, she will soon find some fashionable Adonis, who, after the custom of the times, will often visit the lady at her house; the lady on her side will then have hardly any time to see you, and you will be obliged to shut her up in a convent, or to live in continual disquiet, and what is worse, inquietude of conscience. It would be better, as I have already written to you, that she should have less of birth and fortune than that you should run the risk of some vexatious embarrassment happening to you. Be sure to declare your intention from the first, both to her and to her parents, and say to them that you do not like visits, meetings, &c. When the wedding has taken place, try to give your wife good habits from the first; for this purpose take her to Marianella, and make a long stay there. Be attentive to what I say, for otherwise you will have uneasiness or scruples all your life."

We have another of his letters of the 12th of the same month. Hercules had communicated his matrimonial plans to his brother; Alphonso answered him, "I am rejoiced that such good alliances are offered to you. Use all possible care to choose the wife who will make you least anxious, considering the times in which we live. Be persuaded that young women have more affection for young men than for those in advanced life,

as you are. I would warn you of another thing, which is, that now when you are alone, you ought to take care to send all young female servants away from your house. The devil is always a devil, and with temptations so close, and in the liberty you are, I should tremble for myself. Can you not dismiss them for the present, and tell them that you will take them back when you again set up your establishment?"

Meanwhile Hercules was in want of money. He spoke of it to his Lordship. The answer was alarming. Alphonso wrote to him, "You ask me for money, and I would wish that you could lend to me, for this first year has been a gulf of expenses. I have had to repair two houses, that at St. Agatha and that at Arienzo, and that I have only been able to provide very poorly for the most necessary things. I have had to pay for dilapidations to the chapter four hundred ducats to the nuncio, and I have incurred a debt of four hundred ducats to meet the cost of buildings erected at the seminary, which the students could not inhabit during summer. I have asked how much the revenues will amount to, and I have been told that they would not exceed six hundred ducats, and the time is near at hand when I must pay the burdens with which the episcopal estate is saddled. It would be easier for you to put me into prison than to get anything from me just now, for you must know that at present I give no alms but grains. I sympathize with your pain in having to go to many expenses without having enough to supply

for them. The misfortune is that the episcopate has come to me at the same time as your marriage. Besides, I may say that I too am married, but to a spouse who leaves me no moment of rest." Alphonso wrote to him again on the 12th of December, as follows: "To speak plainly, it appears to me that these projects of marriage will hardly end well; it seems to me that your pretensions are too high. A lady of high family with a portion, seems to me to exceed our condition, which is a little decayed from what it was before. I greatly fear that, when the time of conclusion comes, all these fine matches will slip away from you. May God cause all to succeed as may be most for your soul's advantage."

Don Hercules espoused Donna Marianna Capano Orsini, of the illustrious house of Nilo. Alphonso rejoiced at her virtues more than at her titles. He rendered thanks for it to God, and congratulated his brother. Don Hercules wrote to him, "I expect a most happy future, were it only on account of your prayers and those of your Congregation; and then there is the exemplary conduct of Donna Marianna. She has always been pious, but now she is a saint." Don Hercules ardently desired to have descendants; his apprehension on this subject increased from an accident which seemed to counteract his best-founded hopes. When Alphonso heard of it he replied to his brother, "Your letter has informed me of your wife's miscarriage; God has permitted it, and we must be resigned to His will. I recommend you in all ways and unceasingly to Jesus

Christ, that He will grant you the grace He knows is best suited to you: be then mutually tranquil, and let the Lord act as He wills."

Alphonso's great anxiety for his brother has nothing in it which ought to surprise. The detachment in which he lived from all which concerned the interests of flesh and blood is well known; it may be said that in this respect all things of this world were to him as if they existed not. He was insensible to good as well as to evil fortune, and also to the misfortunes which might afflict those belonging to him; and he never had the curiosity to inquire into the state of their affairs. During the thirty years that he lived among us, and though his journeys to Naples were so frequent, he only entered his paternal house once, when he had to fulfil a last duty to his mother, who was mortally ill. Though his brother lived above us in the same house, he never visited him. He was a stranger even at his own home. One day he went to Naples with Father Pentimalli, and found the door of our hospital shut; he submitted to eat a morsel of bread with some fruit in the ante-chamber, rather than to enter into his brother's apartment. Who would not admire such detachment!

When he was bishop he did not alter his conduct. If his brother had not communicated to him his intention of re-marrying, Alphonso would not have cared about it, and would not have attended to the etiquettes which the world considers necessary between relatives in similar circumstances. Don Hercules would have been delighted to

have had him at Naples to witness his marriage, but he did not ask it because he had no hope of obtaining it. When the nuptials were celebrated custom seemed to require some present to the bride; Alphonso, for his only wedding present, gave her a paper print of the Madonna, inclosed in a little wooden frame, the whole being of the value of a few carlins. Don Hercules was displeased at this conduct, and returned the little frame almost angrily. "My brother takes offence," said Alphonso; "I have however more cause than he; what did he expect to receive? I have so many poor here who die of hunger! Yes, so many poor mendicants, and they demand that I should make presents!" Don Michael Volpicelli, a gentleman of Sarno, who heard these words, told me that this heroic proof of his Lordship's indifference affected all present as well as himself; no one could sufficiently admire his detachment, and the sacrifice he made to the poor of what seemed so justly demanded by so interesting a circumstance as his brother's wedding.

Alphonso had not the same insensibility for his kindred when flesh and blood were not concerned, but he took an interest in all that purely regarded their spiritual welfare; he even made it an object of solicitude. He inquired, he gave advice, and spared no trouble to insure their eternal happiness. Thus he had his father's salvation singularly at heart, and did not cease to try to fit him for it by numerous letters; he aided his mother in the same way by his pious counsels. On the occasion of his brother's mar-

riage he took no pains about the worldly affairs; he even passed over customary forms, and looking only to the good of his brother's soul, he set before him the dangers to which he believed him exposed. In a word, detachment from worldly things counterbalanced his love of his neighbour, and the just equilibrium between the one and the other strengthened Alphonso in performing his duties, thus uniting the necessity of working out his own salvation with the requirements of evangelical charity.

CHAPTER XVII.

Bishop Liguori held preaching as among his first duties as a bishop. "This ministration," said he, "is almost the only one that Jesus Christ seems to have imposed on the apostles, and it is one which he exacts from His bishops; to fail in it, is to avoid an express commandment," so he became remarkable for his assiduity in preaching. He entered the diocese preaching, and it was in preaching that he quitted it.

When he was at St. Agatha, he never missed preaching every Sunday at the cathedral after vespers; and on all feast days which fell during the week, he went to preach in the parishes. His sermons drew together such a great concourse of people of all classes, that it was sufficient to say that Bishop Liguori was going to preach to see

every house deserted. Every Sunday before the sermon he went to the church to catechise the little children, whom he attracted by giving them rosaries, pictures, and sometimes even money. He established a confraternity of nobles in the church of Mount Carmel, as we have seen, and every Sunday he went there to give instructions; if by chance he was prevented in this, he sent in his stead one of the fathers of our Congregation, who lived with him. After vespers, he went again to the church of Mount Carmel, to preach for the confraternity of young girls; ere long the more spacious church of Monte Vergine was obliged to receive this confraternity, on account of its increased size.

When he was at Arienzo the people could not easily come to the collegiate church; therefore he preached alternately in one of the seven parishes of the town; but on great solemnities he preached at the collegiate; and his sermon was always accompanied with exposition of the most blessed Sacrament. He furnished the candles for these churches on these occasions, to prevent any expense to the curates; they wished to decline them, but his Lordship never yielded: he said, "I wish for God's glory not to burden you with expense."

Every Saturday evening he made a man go through the streets with a bell in his hand to announce to the people in what church he would preach on the following day: he wished that the curé should give it out publicly at the prone on the Sunday, and he sent a person with the bell

round the parish. Besides this he ordered the priests that he met on the way to go through the most frequented places to exhort the people to come to church.

He never departed from his familiar style in his sermons. He showed forth truths in a practical manner, and even when he preached on startling subjects, he always concluded by motives for confidence. He said, "If one does not encourage the sinner to have recourse to God, at the same time that one leads him to penance, all the preacher's efforts are useless." He was accustomed to sing one of the pious hymns he had himself composed before the sermon.

Every Saturday, as he had vowed, he published the praises of our Blessed Lady; at St. Agatha he did it in the cathedral, but at Arienzo he was in the habit of choosing the church of the Annunziata; Jesus and Mary were the centre of all his affection. He never spoke of the love of Jesus Christ for man without also speaking of the love of Mary, and he never spoke of the love of Mary without exciting the people to love Jesus Christ. Not satisfied with doing this himself, he established this devotion in all the diocese, and according to the convenience of the people it took place in one town on Saturday, and in another on Sunday, always with exposition of the blessed Sacrament; at Arienzo he wished it to be made twice, on the Saturday in the church of the nuns of the Annunziata with a sermon by a Capuchin father, and on the Sunday in the collegiate church, where the canons were

ordered to preach by turns. He established the same practice in all populous parishes.

Each month he visited a church which he had fixed on beforehand, and he was accustomed to make the protestation for a good death there, accompanied with exposition of the blessed Sacrament. It is impossible to believe what great good Bishop Liguori effected by this exercise. He exposed the deformity of vice and the beauty of virtue, and caused it to appear with admirable clearness to his audience, which was always numerous, and he showed, in a practical way, the great contrast between the death of the just and that of the sinner; all his hearers melted into tears, and hell lost much thereby. Alphonso used to take advantage of this opportunity to recite some chosen hymns, which had not less success than the sermon.

During the three last days of the carnival he was in the habit of having public adoration and exposition of the blessed Sacrament to hinder the people from going to public shows. When he was at St. Agatha, there was a sermon in the morning, at which he assisted, and which was delivered by a deacon from the seminary His Lordship preached himself in the evening, and enlarged on the exceeding love of Jesus Christ for man. He had a similar forty-hours' prayer celebrated in all parts of his diocese, and when he was at Arienzo he wished that the evening sermons at St. Agatha should be given by the Lent preacher, and those of the morning by three different canons. He fixed that at Arienzo there

should be a sermon in the church of the nuns of St. Philip, with exposition of the blessed Sacrament, during the Sundays in Lent after vespers, and this sermon he preached himself. When there were not many present he generally spoke of the love of Jesus Christ for us; but, when the auditors were numerous, he showed the grievousness of sin. However bad the weather might be on the day, he never failed to go to give this sermon. One Sunday a furious storm came on; Alphonso, though ill and urged not to go, still went to St. Philip's: he caught a cold, from which he suffered a long time in consequence.

Our Lord, to whom the establishment of this devotion in this church was pleasing, favoured it sometimes by a special providence. One Sunday the bishop had suffered much in the morning from fever; he received the visits of his doctor and Canon Don Marc' Antonio Ambrosio after vespers, who assured him that the fever had not left him. His Lordship then asked if Benediction would be celebrated. "How can there be Benediction," replied the canon, "if your Lordship is not able to be there?" Alphonso replied, "It will take place however, and you must preach instead of me." "How can I?" answered the canon, "I have not time to prepare myself for it." "I wish you to preach," repeated Alphonso, and you are to make your preparation while the nuns say compline." The canon obeyed; and he has assured me that by virtue of having put his confidence in holy obedience, he preached for an hour, and that he

never spoke with so much facility in all his life, nor produced so remarkable an impression on his hearers.

The conventual fathers of St. Agatha were in the habit of exposing the blessed Sacrament to the veneration of the people every Saturday in March, and had a sermon each time from one of their clerks. Believing these discourses to be merely an exercise for the young men, without fruit to the people, and wishing to procure farther good to their souls, his Lordship offered to preach there himself; as he had no carriage, he went there always on foot, however severe the weather might be. Before the sermon he was accustomed to sing his hymn, *O my Jesus*, and he did it in so touching a way that all the people melted into tears. The convent generally gave the young preacher ten carlins; Alphonso, not to deprive the clerks of this retribution, wished that they should continue to fix on some one who could preach in his stead in case he should be prevented; and the one so nominated received the same sum whether he preached or not.

During Lent, he was in the habit of giving the spiritual exercises to the regular and secular clergy at Arienzo or at St. Agatha. He never forgot to depict to them the death of a holy priest and that of a sinful one, and that which follows for the one and for the other.

He also adopted the custom of celebrating the novena of the birth of our Blessed Lord, every year in his cathedral after vespers, together with exposition of the blessed Sacrament. The

people were deeply affected in hearing him speak of so great a mystery. He expressed himself so clearly, that the most simple woman went away quite satisfied. He also celebrated every year the novena of the Assumption, and that of St. Joseph. He left the panegyric of the Saint however, to one of the Capuchin fathers, not wishing to deprive these religious of the alms attached to this sermon. Sometimes, instead of the novena of St. Joseph, he celebrated the Seven Wednesdays which preceded his feast; he also composed special hymns on this subject.

When a young person presented herself at the altar to make her religious profession, it was he who received the sacrifice of the holocaust, and presented it to the Lord Jesus Christ. This ceremony was always accompanied with a pathetic discourse, which he pronounced with so much unction, that he penetrated the hearts of all present. Alphonso did all this from zeal, without wishing for the smallest thanks. He did it willingly, even for every lay-sister. At one time, when he was suffering very much from his infirmities, he was invited by a lay-sister who was to make her profession at Airola, in the monastery of *Regina Cœli*. Alphonso accepted the invitation; he was so ill, that fearing to be unable to finish the ceremony, he told Father Peter Pollastrelli to get ready for it as a precaution; he went there, however, and drew forth sufficient strength from his zeal. On these occasions he always went to the parish church, to distribute the bread of the gospel to the people,

and he did this every day that he staid in any place. But he did not content himself with that; as soon as he knew that any particular solemnity would attract a great concourse of people into any particular church, he went there to preach. He said, "Jesus Christ began to convert souls by preaching, and by preaching this must be continued. Everything consists in preaching well Jesus crucified." On these occasions, there was no need of inviting him or letting him know beforehand. One feast day at St. Mary de Vico, he passed before the church of St. Nicholas, and noticed that the church was filled by the faithful; he immediately got out of the carriage and entered determined to preach: mass was being celebrated at the time; he ordered the celebrant to interrupt the sacrifice, and he ascended the pulpit. Thus the people did not go away before they had listened to his sermon.

Canon Don Marc' Anthonio Ambrosio was engaged in celebrating an octave in honour of the Feast of the Purification, in the church of the Congregation of our Lady of Grace. One Sunday Alphonso, hearing that an immense crowd filled the church, sent for the canon, and begged him in the most humble terms to allow him to preach that day in his stead. He did it, and his sermon, in which he represented in a lively way the terrible consequences of a sinner's death, produced so general a sensation that it is spoken of even to this day.

At Arienzo, Don Pascal Calcabale practised the devotion of celebrating every year for three

days the feast of the holy cross, in the parish church of St. Felix; the people went there in crowds; the solemnity was brilliant; there was music and a long sermon each day. When they went to Alphonso the first year he was at Arienzo, to ask his permission for the exposition of the blessed Sacrament, and to have his approbation for the preacher, "What!" exclaimed he, "this feast is to be celebrated, and I have nothing to do with it! I will go and preach there myself." But Don Calcabale represented to him that there was not time enough to prepare himself, for that the feast commenced the next day, and the subject of the sermon was quite particular for the occasion. "That signifies little," replied Alphonso; "have not mortal sin and the cross connexion together?" He ascended the pulpit, and preached on the enormity of mortal sin, which fastened Jesus Christ to the cross. He was so attached to this feast, that he undertook to preach the sermons for it.

The fathers of the monastery of Monte Vergine also celebrated the novena of St. Joseph in their church at Arienzo, with exposition of the blessed Sacrament. Many people went there, and yet the whole exercise consisted of a few prayers. The bishop let the fathers know that if they liked he would preach there willingly, were it only in a few words; but when Alphonso saw a large audience before him he entered on a real sermon. At last the novena was changed into a little mission. The servant Alexius begged him to speak more particularly of St. Joseph; his Lordship

replied, "May St. Joseph be praised, but for me, I wish sin to be extirpated and that God should not be offended." He did not fail however to conclude by an invocation to this powerful protector. In a word, there was no feast in any church or country chapel that his Lordship, whether ill or well, did not wish to go to himself, to announce the word of God and to fight against vice. "There is no festival," said he, "where many sins are not committed;" and he wished to contribute personally towards the diminution or expiation of these sins.

The convent of the Capuchin fathers of Arienzo is pleasantly situated on a hill at some distance from the town. The people go there in crowds on the Monday in Easter week, to eat *pigeon* as they say. Many parties of people of all classes go there to pass the day in various diversions. In order to prevent the disorders which might be committed there Alphonso went to this church after vespers; he had exposition of the blessed Sacrament there, and when the people were assembled together preached for hours to them. He did the same thing on the feast of St. Anthony of Padua, when a similar concourse of people took place in the convent church.

For the same reason he went to the fathers of St. Augustine, on the feast of the Girdle. To invite his Lordship to preach in any church was to invite him to a nuptial. He was in the habit of saying that "the word of God always brings forth fruit, and there is nothing which hell labours more to hinder than preaching." His zeal

was specially manifested when he had to preach to men, and particularly to nobles or the learned; he said, "When man is converted piety will reign among women also."

One evening he was returning with his grand vicar to St. Agatha from Airola, where he had assisted at the profession of two young women: he arrived at the church of the Annunziata; as this was the first time he was seen there the people went in crowds to receive his blessing. His Lordship blessed them and continued his journey. When he reached the church of the Virginian fathers he said to his grand vicar, "I feel an impulse to say a word or two to these people." The grand vicar wished to dissuade him from it, and begged him to remember that he had not his pontifical dress. "But," replied the bishop, "who knows if there is not some soul there to save?" Then making up his mind he added, "My rochet and stole will be sufficient." He then went towards the church; the people, being surprised to see him turn back, surrounded him and followed him to the church, where Alphonso preached for more than an hour. He got a chill there, which was followed by fever on the following day; nevertheless, as he wished to take advantage of the great concourse of people, who seemed eager for the word of God, he remained three days longer in the place, and preached there every evening for an hour. He was so convinced of the good he had done there, that from this time he never failed to preach there each time he passed through the place.

His Lordship took advantage even of public calamities to increase the interest of his sermons. In the spring of the year 1768 there was so great a drought in all the diocese, but principally at Arienzo, that all the wells were dried up. In this general distress our saint thought of celebrating a novena in the church of the Annunziata in honour of our Blessed Lady, to implore the mercy of God: this exercise became in fact a mission. On the first evening, after he had addressed his numerous audience, he assured them that if they would become truly converted the Lord would comfort them by sending an abundant rain on St. Anne's day. He continued to preach on the just punishments which overtake the sinner, and he often struck himself severely with a thick rope. He sent two Capuchin fathers of Naples, Samuel and Cyprian, through the neighbouring country after the sermon, to exhort the inhabitants to penance; after this he kept these fathers with him, together with some others, to hear confessions. The novena succeeded most happily, and through the prayers of the saint the calamity ceased, as he had promised. Dry weather continued, and there was no hope of rain; but on St. Anne's day, towards noon, the heavens became covered with clouds, which poured forth an abundant rain and watered all the distressed country.

In eternity alone shall we learn the whole extent of the good which Bishop Liguori effected in his diocese by his discourses. His words were fruitful, because they came from a humble heart

full of the love of God. "Since his Lordship's arrival at St. Agatha we have lost a great deal," said an officer of justice, who had the care of the diocese, to a Neapolitan incumbent, "for his sermons and those he has caused to be preached have made the people so peaceable that there is no longer any disorder to be found."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Bishop Liguori was not satisfied with putting his own hand to the spade and hoe for the culture of his vineyard; he wished to be assisted by labourers animated by the same spirit, and provided with necessary science to aid him in his toils and hasten the maturity of the fruit. As soon as he entered the diocese, or rather, from the time he accepted the bishopric, he thought of missions. He was in treaty when at Naples with the superiors of all the Congregations in order to obtain their co-operation; he applied particularly as a fellow-labourer to Don Joseph Sparano, superior of the Society of the Apostolical Missions, and to the canon Don Joseph Pace, superior of the Society of the Conference. He earnestly solicited the superior of the Congregation of Pious Workmen, Stephen Longobardi, to send a mission to Arienzo, as well as the provincial of the Jesuits, Father Don Matteis, to send another to Durazzano; he was the more

urgent for this country, as it was necessary to make use of legacies left for this intention. He also addressed petitions to the superior of the missionary priests of the church of St. George. He also applied to the Dominican Fathers, and recommended himself particularly to his cousin, the Father Master Cavalieri.

In the course of the autumn of 1762, the superior of the Congregation of the Conference placed more than five-and-twenty missionaries at his disposal, who were chosen from among his best subjects. Alphonso sent them to labour in several populous places, and caused the Pious Workmen to preach at Arienzo at this time, and the Jesuits at Durazzano. This general assault upon vice caused the diocese to assume quite an altered appearance. Virtue and piety flourished again among all classes, and all became better, both ecclesiastics and gentlemen, as well as the people at large.

Whilst these and other missionaries were labouring in divers places, the chief pastor of the diocese did not take any rest, or content himself with the efforts of others; he repaired to Arienzo, while the Pious Workmen gave their mission there: "And I also," said he to them, "I wish to do something." He was particularly urgent about reforming the conduct of gentlemen, and resolved to give them the spiritual exercises. After having united all the noblemen together in the bond of charity, he formed them into a Congregation, to which he gave particular statutes, and incited them to frequent the sacraments. He gave

these exercises in the church of the Carmelite fathers. In his sermon on the patronage of Mary, he spoke with the fire of a seraph; his face was illuminated, and its brightness shed a supernatural splendour on the church: he exclaimed, at the same time, carried out of himself in an ecstacy, "See, here is the Virgin coming to scatter blessings; ask her for these blessings; she is ready to grant you everything."

After the mission at Arienzo Alphonso undertook to go and give another himself in the village of St. Mary de Vico, which contained more than 4,000 inhabitants; he asked for the aid of ten Dominican fathers of the convent of la Sanita in Naples. As the parish church was not large enough, he obtained leave from the Dominican fathers of the place to give the mission in their church. The Father Master Canti, of the monastery of Durazzano, gave the catechism, another gave the exercises to the clergy, and Alphonso himself undertook the principal sermon. Several times, while weeping over his people's sins, he struck himself in the pulpit most cruelly with a thick cord. One evening the Father Prior and other clerics were moved with compassion, and took away his discipline by main force. The mission lasted twenty-two days, and every one marvelled to see how an old man of sixty-seven, broken down by infirmities, could bear up under so much. But that which astonished them most was his penitential life. His repast consisted of a simple soup ill prepared by the lay-brother, who was a cook only through necessity, some ounces

of boiled meat, and a little fruit. This was always his diet during all the missions.

One evening, after the Dominican father who preached to the clergy, had ended his sermon, his Lordship unexpectedly presented himself before them. He said to them, "If any one amongst the clergy has a scruple about having received his benefice by simony, let him come to me; I am come here to help him." It was known in fact that a young ecclesiastic was in this case, and that after having been to his Lordship he was freed from his scruple, and preserved his benefice. It is useless to speak of the fruits of this mission. Alphonso's life of penance and the energetic simplicity of his apostolic eloquence produced the most consolatory effects on every heart.

To give full liberty of conscience he caused the best confessors throughout the diocese to come to St. Mary's, and placed them in the monastery, wishing that neither he nor these confessors should be an expense to the public.

He contented himself with only being present at the mission at Airola. He returned to Arienzo on Christmas day, and celebrated pontifically in the collegiate church of St. Andrew. Canon Angelo Magillo and others have attested, that after having received the Precious Blood, our saint entered all of a sudden into an ecstacy, and that his face beamed with heavenly fire.

After having visited all the diocese, he kept the celebrated missionary, Giuseppe Jorio, with him, and caused him to give a spiritual renewal

of the missions. Father Jorio finished what had been commenced, and fervour became redoubled in the Congregations which were instituted by his Lordship.

Alphonso did not like to employ missionaries of his own Congregation when he first arrived at St. Agatha, from the fear that they might be suspected to be his spies; for this reason he employed those who could exercise their ministry with perfect freedom. He founded his hopes on those of his own Congregation however, and in the end caused some of them to come each year from Nocera, Ciorani, and St. Angelus.

Besides the Neapolitan missionaries and our own, he got other labourers to come from the provinces. He heard that there were priests among the clergy of Caserti who laboured with success for the good of souls; he immediately did all he could to have them in his diocese. He also invited, on different occasions, the missionary fathers of the respected Congregation of St. Peter of Cæsarano.

During his visitation he, as we have seen, encouraged several excellent priests, whom he judged fit for this ministration, to devote themselves to the salvation of souls. He sent these priests each year to preach in inconsiderable places, in the neighbourhood of St. Agatha, Airola, and Arienzo. He invited besides some priests of Cerreto, who were equally experienced in apostolical ministry, to go and labour in these same places.

He visited the whole of his diocese every two years, and he also caused several missionaries

to go through it in the same space of time; and to those who blamed this multiplicity of missions, he answered, that skilful husbandmen are accustomed to throw a double quantity of seed into places where the earth is dry and barren; and he added, "It is thus we must do, if we would have an ample harvest. When the seed is sown in abundance, if all does not come up, at least a part of it does. Jesus Christ compares the word of God to wheat: if it is not sown, neither can it be gathered."

Besides these missions he had recourse to divers other exercises, such as novenas and triduos, in order to strengthen the good and awaken the sinful. From the first he also introduced the adoration of the forty hours at the carnival, and it was particularly at that time that he caused the most zealous preachers to ascend the pulpits.

He exacted great charity from all the missionaries towards sinners. Whoever he made use of, he did not fail to remind them of the true principles which rendered their ministry efficacious, which he called a ministry of grace and pardon. Once he spoke very plainly to some missionaries whom he knew to be guilty of rigorism, though they belonged to a respectable Congregation. "My fathers," he said to them, "too much indulgence in a confessor is hurtful to souls, but too much rigour is not less prejudicial; I blame certain rigid spirits, who are not according to knowledge, and destroy rather than edify; with sinners charity and mildness are necessary. Such was the method of Jesus Christ, and if we would

lead souls to God and save them, we must not imitate Jansenius, but Jesus Christ, the chief of missionaries."

He also advised them to preach in a popular style, familiarly and without a series of long periods. He said, "When Jesus Christ preached He did not use turns of sentences nor rhetorical expressions; all His words were on a level with the people's comprehension; His proofs were natural, and never abstract. He used parables and comparisons, which by striking the mind and heart, triumphed over the will. The apostles were instructed by Him, and they imitated Him; and, we also must do as they did; if not, journeys, expense, and fatigue of every sort will all become useless." These brief but solid instructions were of great use to all the missionaries, and were never unattended by profit.

One day when he was present at a mission given by the fathers of a distinguished order, he was seen to move about uneasily on his throne, because the preacher used chosen terms and studied phrases. The sermon was hardly ended before he sent for the preacher, and reprimanded him severely. "That is to betray the people and Jesus Christ," he said to him; "if you only seek to preach yourself, and not Jesus crucified, why did you take the trouble to leave Naples? I do not excuse you from mortal sin."

It would be difficult to say how much Alphonso interested himself in the work of missions; his disinterestedness and solicitude on this subject are proofs of his great devotion to it. His zeal

for the salvation of souls consumed him; and as a husbandman spares nothing to render his vine more flourishing, so the saintly bishop was indefatigable to cause piety to be honoured in the diocese. He sent couriers to Naples and every where to obtain labourers. He was careful to provide for their wants and to guard against inconveniences; and the expenses of the missions, except those at Naples, which were provided for by foundations, were all placed to his account. It was he who paid the journeys, lodgings, and food; he freed the incumbents and town from all expense, and furnished even the oil and candles for the churches. But this even is the least part of what he did: the missionaries were lodged and fed at his charge wherever they went, even in labours they undertook of their own accord. He was especially careful to enable them to give beds and other indispensable things to the poor whose misery caused them to make their children sleep with them, and he exhorted them to take particular care of necessitous families, female converts, and young girls in danger.

Notwithstanding all his pains and disinterestedness, he had still much difficulty in overcoming the obstacles he sometimes met with from the old incumbents, who, fearing every sort of trouble, used at first to allege the want of house-room as their principal hinderance, which often was only a false pretext however. When Alphonso met with a refusal from such a motive he wrote to the grand vicar in whose jurisdiction the place where he wished to have the

mission was, in order that the cost of the maintenance of the missionaries should be provided for at his own expense; and, even if it cost him a great deal, he thought himself very fortunate in having procured this great means of salvation for his people.

He had much to suffer from an incumbent on this head, who, not wishing to have the missionaries, excused himself, saying, that he had not and could not procure a house. Alphonso, who divined the incumbent's real feeling, answered that he must procure one at any price, and that it would be defrayed for him; the priest finding himself caught on this side, found other pretexts to justify his refusal. The bishop wrote to him in energetic terms, telling him that he was disedified by his conduct, for that while others solicited for a mission, and thanked him heartily when they had received it, he on the contrary refused it when offered to him. This letter offended the priest, who replied in terms anything but respectful. Indignant at this obstinacy, the grand vicar and others wished him to be imprisoned, but the bishop blamed their hastiness and pitied the incumbent's weakness, who in the end himself asked for the mission. On this Alphonso, far from showing any farther dissatisfaction, even begged his pardon. He wrote to him, "I do not say that your Reverence has put any impediment in the way, but I said that you did not show the anxiety I should have wished; if I have been wrong in this, I hope that now all may be as before again. Blessed be God, who

has permitted this unpleasantness to arise to you as well as to me."

To do away with the excuse of the want of a house, Alphonso applied to the gentlemen of the different places who did not reside in the houses they had there. At Airola, he always had recourse to the Prince della Riccia, who gave up a suite of rooms in his palace to him. Don Bartholomew of Capua, who was the last prince of this family, had also the greatest veneration for his Lordship; indeed, when the furtherance of a mission was in question, Alphonso would have applied not only to the king, but also to the sovereign Pontiff.

As the parochial church of St. Mary de Vico was too small to hold all the people, and his Lordship could not make use of that of the Dominican fathers, who alone had the right of preaching there, he applied to their general to obtain permission to do so.

To cause the Lenten sermons to be as profitable as those of the missions, he exacted their being in a simple popular style: "How can the people profit," said he, "from sermons which even the preacher does not understand himself?" All who wished to preach in the diocese, in Alphonso's time, were obliged to be very careful on this point, but some were wanting in good will. Among those whom our saint willingly invited to preach, was the celebrated Don Cæsar Abbignenti, canon of the cathedral of Sarno, and Don Benedict Barba, formerly of the Congregation of St. Peter of Cæsarano, and at that time canon of Avella.

He also employed two other distinguished men, Capuchins of the convent of Arienzo, by name Samuel and Cyprian of Naples, who were formed and instructed according to his own principles. It was to these above all others to whom he entrusted the Advent sermons, and those which were delivered in the cathedral. As in many localities the parishioners had the right of electing the preachers, he never failed to speak to the most influential persons in each place to get them to name subjects who were well known, and according to his wishes. "The prize that one gives a preacher is the blood of the poor," said he; "if the people derive no benefit, it is a wrong committed against them; and the preacher as well as those who have chosen him are all equally bound to make restitution." Unhappily this right of parishes, founded on very ancient usage, was not always exercised in a spirit of true piety; motives of private interest, or worldly civilities, often dictated the votes given. Thus Alphonso often had the sorrow to see persons ascend the pulpit at Arienzo who were far from being those of his own choice. In order to remedy this abuse, he asked and obtained that the preachers should be chosen among the Capuchin fathers exclusively. He represented to them, amongst other reasons, that these holy religious rendered great service to the public, by the continual aid they gave to the dying, and that it was just that they should have some amends.

Before giving his approbation to the preachers selected he obliged them to engage to give the

spiritual exercises during Passion week in the form of a mission, and those who showed repugnance to do that were always refused. He was in the habit of saying to those who nominated the preachers, "The right of election belongs to you, but it is for me to regulate the subject and form of the sermons." The regulars succeeded ill for the most part, being accustomed to speak with too much preparation and measuredness, and to be more occupied about words and periods than even the matter they had to treat of; in our saint's judgment this method was useless, to say the least; for if the memory proves treacherous to the preacher, all his science vanishes, and words fail him altogether.

In the exercises of Lent, he wished the catechism to precede the sermon, and he caused it to be given by the incumbents or other priests. During this time he was attentive in seeing that the confessors should mutually exchange parishes. He provided for their food and other expenses by means of his rural deans; in this way the Lenten exercises, which had formerly been useless to the people, produced general advantage, thanks to the pains-taking care of the vigilant bishop.

When the preachers and confessors presented themselves before him to receive his benediction, Alphonso liked to keep them for some days with him, and in conversing with them, he judged of their capability and knowledge. The obligations of the sacred ministry, charity towards sinners, and the necessity of encouraging them in pen-

ance, furnished him with inexhaustible subjects of conversation, but above all, with the motives for very particular exhortations.

Even in panegyrics, he wished, as we have seen, that the preacher should speak simply. "For what use are panegyrics," said he, "if not to expose the virtues of a saint with clearness, and to excite others to imitate them? If one confines oneself to making an eulogium, no utility whatever can result from it; if the people do not understand what they hear and do not apply it, how can they imitate the model proposed to them?" On the celebration of the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, at Arienzo, they sent for a subject of a celebrated order in Naples to make the penegyric; Alphonso was too ill to officiate himself, but wished notwithstanding to be present; but what did he not suffer in hearing flowery expressions and high-flown phrases delivered by the preacher! If he did not quit the church it was only to avoid creating disturbance in the ceremony; he at least turned towards the high altar and turned his back on the pulpit and the preacher. When he had returned home he sent for him, and in a tone of authority thus addressed him: "Is it not to wish to betray Jesus Christ and the people to preach in that way? If I did not make you come down from the pulpit, it was from respect to the habit you wear. What fruit have the people gathered from all the tropes, from all the figures of speech and pompous descriptions with which you ornamented your discourse? All that

was only the fruit of vanity, and can only merit the fire of purgatory. Your end ought to have been to touch hearts and cause tears to be shed; but the people were insensible, because they understood nothing." It was the greatest suffering to our ardent pastor when he had to be present at a panegyric given by some popular preacher.

CHAPTER XIX.

In the year 1763, all Italy, but particularly the town of Naples, was a prey to most fearful distress, which caused our saint to have an increase of sorrow and of merit. He foresaw this calamity before his election to the bishopric; when he gave the spiritual exercises at Naples, in the church of La Misericordiella, he became more animated than usual one evening, and in declaiming against sin he exclaimed, as the priest, Niccolo Rotondo of Tegora, has attested, "Beware, beware, God will overtake us with famine!" He predicted this at two other times also. Such a menace from his lips made an impression, indeed, but yet it was taken as a word said at random. The dean Daddio told me, that during the mission at St. Agatha, at different times, he exclaimed while preaching penance to the people, "My children, cease to sin, for a great calamity is threatening you!" Another time Canon Don Vincenzo Viscardi, who assisted at his sermon,

heard him address his auditory in these terms: "Amend your lives, I repeat to you, and recommend yourselves to God, for a great famine will soon afflict you." In the year which preceded the fatal winter of 1763–1764, he expressed himself still more definitely. He was at Arienzo, and while in the collegiate church of St. Andrew, he represented in the most lively way the enormity of sin to the people, and exclaimed, "God will chastise us by a great scarcity, and the famine will be so great, that for want of bread even the herbs which grow close to the hedges will be eaten!" Another day the incumbent, Lorenzo Caprio, heard him say, "Beware and tremble, for God is preparing a great scourge for us, not because He wishes for our loss, but because He wishes our salvation. In a year we shall be afflicted by a dreadful scarcity." The people were wearied with these reiterated menaces, and said, "Where is this bishop come from? He only foretells famine and bad seasons."

The prophecy was only too true; but if God willed him to be a prophet, He did not allow him to be so for himself. After the harvest of the year 1763, Alphonso being in want of money for his alms, only kept the usual quantity of corn for the poor, and sold the rest to supply their wants. He soon found that he had none left. But some days after having sold the corn, he seemed suddenly to become aware of what he had done, sent for his secretary, and in an animated way ordered him to buy a great quantity of kidney and French beans and other vegetables.

Nobody understood the mystery, and all laughed at it, the secretary being the first to do so, for the harvest had been at least a tolerable one; his Lordship however would be obeyed, and during the months of September and October they collected a large store of these vegetables. The eagerness he showed in taking this step doubtless arose from an inspiration which he had received from God.

The month of November of 1763 had not terminated before the scarcity, with the rapidity of a torrent, spread itself from one end of the kingdom to another. It is difficult to imagine the holy bishop's sorrow in seeing the multitude of starving poor; they had no bread left, and so all recurred to their common father for aid in their distress. The large hall of the episcopal palace was sometimes crowded with four or five hundred of these distressed people, who, in the most suppliant posture and with tearful eyes begged for a morsel of bread. Alphonso only listened to the dictates of charity, and tried to relieve them all. He said to his servants, "Make them all go away satisfied; they only ask for what belongs to them." He applied to his rich patrons however to obtain corn and lentils. He sent for fifty measures of beans from Cerra, and at a very high price. He applied to his brother Hercules at Naples, at that time one of the governors of the city, and as the famine was not yet extreme at Naples, he received plenty of corn, though it had already begun to be sold at six ducats the measure. Alphonso received nu-

merous donations, and was overjoyed at being able to assist his poor children.

Full of zeal for all, he inquired minutely into the wants of each; he had a large list placed in the great hall, on which all the necessitous families were noted down alphabetically; as they presented themselves he drew a tally corresponding to their name, and all received according to their poverty, a portion of beans or other vegetables, together with some alms in money. Besides this, he had arranged a private list of families who were prevented from coming to his palace through shame or some other cause.

In spite of all the pains he took he met with an unexpected reproach in church one day. While he was preaching and entreating the people to return thanks to God for the protection He had afforded to the town of St. Agatha, which was much less afflicted than many other places, a common woman suddenly interrupted him, and raising her voice, began to reproach him for having sold his corn. Alphonso was discomposed, and could not restrain his tears; he could not reply to this attack on him. Happily the audience were able to judge between their pastor and his calumniator; every one was indignant at the woman's boldness; they gave her no time to say another word, and she was very fortunate in making her escape safe and sound. Alphonso was destitute of money, so he wished to borrow by paying interest, but he was constantly refused. In fact, who would have wished

to risk his principal and be satisfied with the guarantee of an old man of sixty-seven, asthmatic and broken down with infirmities? In this extremity, not knowing what to do, he thought of selling the ring which had been made a present to him at Naples by Jane Sersale, (the widow of Don Francis Cavalieri, and wife of Counsellor Vespoli,) as well as that which he had received from Bishop Giannini of Lettere, and which had belonged to his uncle the bishop of Troy. The priest Don Boniface Galdieri was at St. Agatha at the time; Alphonso entrusted these things to him, charging him to sell them at Naples, with a little pectoral cross of gold, which he had also received as a gift, only keeping one of silver-gilt for pontifical ceremonials. Besides this he ordered his secretary to sell the little plate he had, and was satisfied to use copper instead. Not knowing what else to sell he was on the point of getting rid of his rochet and watch, but he gave up this idea on its being represented to him that they were of little value, while to him a watch was indispensable.

As the scarcity continued to increase ,Alphonso resolved to sell his carriage, but he had to contend against the opposition of the grand vicar, the canons, and gentlemen, who represented to him not only his infirmities, but his dignity as a bishop. "St. Peter was Pope," replied Alphonso, "and he had no carriage; why should I have one, I, who am not greater than St. Peter?" His brother Hercules interfered in this discussion, and joined his opponents, being convinced how

much Alphonso needed his carriage. "All these pretexts to induce me to keep my carriage are only a temptation of the devil in my opinion, to disquiet me as well as you," replied Alphonso; "I take advice in doubtful things, but not in those where there is certainty; and for my part, I am certain that God does not wish me to keep a thing of such value uselessly. I am old; I have already one foot in the grave; I am burthened with debts; I want a great deal of money to meet several necessary expenses for the glory of God, and I am distressed to death at being able to do nothing, because, first I have to pay the debts I have contracted against you and the seminary. Do not torment me any longer about this affair, for I will not answer you any more. You know very well besides, that when I come to a resolution, after a careful examination, I never go back from it. I cannot bear to see the mules remaining in the stable nearly all the year with nothing to do, while the coachman is wasting his time, and the poor are asking me for bread." As Don Hercules wrote him that Mgr. Testa disapproved of it, Alphonso added, "If Mgr. Testa would hear me myself, I should certainly gain my cause with him, but for that I should have to tell him all my reasons."

Don Hercules did not cease to insist on his point, and represented to him the need he would have of sometimes going to Naples. His Lordship replied on the 13th of December, 1763: "You must know that very probably I shall not go to Naples any more, for if I have the annoy-

ance of being summoned there, I shall send my grand vicar, or one of the canons instead; my excuse is quite ready: I am old and ill; I no longer leave my house." That which he had resolved on, he executed. On the 5th of January, he sent his carriage and mules to Naples. His brother Don Gaetan, not wishing them to pass into the hands of strangers, bought them himself, and at a very high price. "I flatter myself," Don Hercules wrote to him the same day, "that you have at last changed your mind; at my rate, if you persist in your view of the subject, you can always consider the carriage as belonging to you, and when you wish it, I will procure it for you at my own expense. You are and always shall be in all things master of my judgment."

The scourge continued to increase its ravages, and the zealous pastor applied to the Pope, representing his people's wants to him, and supplicating him to grant him permission to mortgage all his own income in order to be able to succour the poor. Though the Pope consented to this, the answer did not arrive in time; Alphonso united all the heads of the chapels together, and begged or rather commanded them to pawn all their plate. This was done, but it was only as a few drops of water cast on a great conflagration; the indefatigable bishop took no rest; he daily assembled the principal gentlemen, canons, and chief functionaries, and consulted with them as to the means of relieving the town, and preventing the death of the poor by hunger. Many refused to give him money, but many oth-

ers, being moved with compassion, placed generous donations in his hands; others, such as Lady Camilla Vinaccia, supplied him with money under the name of a loan, but no doubt they never expected to recover the advances they had made. Father Matteis, provincial of the Jesuits, being informed of the great difficulty in which the holy bishop was, sent him a note of thirty ducats to be distributed among the poor.

The pious pastor was charged with the sins of the people, and offered himself as a victim to the justice of heaven; he bound himself with haircloth, and disciplined himself most severely every day; to incite his people to penance, he preached on every feast-day, and repeated unceasingly that sin was the only cause of all the present evils. Every evening at the visit to the blessed Sacrament, he renewed his animated exhortations, which were always welcomed with gratitude. One evening on his return home, a woman of the people ran after him, and exclaimed in a fury, "Would to God you had never come among us! since you have been here you have only announced calamities, and now you make us eat bread at seven grains the pound." Then raising her hand in a menacing way, she added: "You have plenty of money, you, I say, to eat it at this price." Alphonso, far from being moved at these violent and unexpected words, gave his blessing to the woman. The sacristan, Michael d'Apruzzo, who accompanied him, began to scold the insolent woman, and took her by the shoulder in order to force her to go away; Alphonso was

indignant at this, and punished him for it, by four days' imprisonment. "These unhappy people deserve compassion," said he; "it is not their heart, but famine which makes them speak." God however did not leave such a wicked act unpunished, and this woman, who had lived in ease before, was soon reduced to the lowest beggary.

CHAPTER XX.

The scarcity of corn was increased by the avarice of the rich, who, fearing to become victims themselves, spent large sums of money in buying great quantities of provisions, and in this way bread was soon entirely wanting in Naples and in all the country of Apulia. The price of corn was raised to more than fifteen ducats the measure. Don Hercules informed Alphonso, in the month of March, 1764, that the calamity afflicted Naples also; Alphonso replied thus: "I am extremely grieved to hear that scarcity exists now in the capital. In sincerity I say, it pains me greatly, but as God wills it to be so, may His will be done always. Write to me often, and tell me how one can procure corn. We are all in distress, you in Naples and we here; let us be resigned to God's will. The Lord chastises Naples in a special manner because there are many in that town who do not believe in God. God grant that now they may be converted!"

Poverty increased in Naples to such a degree that the scourge spared no one; the starving poor were seen, as Alphonso had predicted, eating the grass of the hedges, and seeking in the country for the nourishment which beasts had refused to eat, so as even to feed on noxious herbs. On seeing thousands of these poor people going about the streets like spectres, Alphonso was ready to die for sorrow. He would have liked never to eat more, to be able to aid his poor children; he confined himself to bread and broth, and sent for his secretary, saying to him, "You see how the people are dying of hunger; it is necessary therefore that we should do without something more; and so you must bear patiently yourself as well as the others." He told the grand vicar the same thing, and his table was only supplied with broth and a very little boiled meat from this time, with which every one was obliged to be satisfied without exception. He convoked together the superiors of all the convents in his diocese, being full of solicitude for his people, and not only begged but commanded them to contribute to the relief of the poor by retrenching some part of their ordinary expenditure. He heard that the superior of a wealthy convent was very stingy towards the poor. He sent for him and reproached him for his hardheartedness: "I am obliged," replied the religious, "to maintain my family; I give what is over to the poor, and no more." This answer pained our saint; he rose from his chair full of indignation, and said in an imposing manner,

"Do you know what maintain means? It signifies that it is necessary to eat enough to preserve life, and that the surplus ought to be given to the poor. When you became a religious, you said that you wished to lead a life of poverty and penance. Do you believe in the Gospel, or are you a Turk?" The religious changed his line of conduct, and the poor of the place were quite differently treated from this time.

We may truly say that Alphonso acted like a glorious apostle of Christian charity during this calamity at St. Agatha. The poor were in his eyes the special members of Jesus Christ, and all shared in his solicitude. He was delighted when he could assist them, and wept when he had nothing to give them. Everything was open to them, and there was not a single room in the palace where one did not see some poor person being comforted or snatched from the grasp of death. One evening after the poor had all been relieved, the secretary in going to bed saw a man stretched on a bench in the hall; he thought he was asleep, but on going up to him with brother Francis Anthony and the servant Alexius, with the intention of awaking him, they saw that he was motionless and nearly expiring. They immediately informed their master. He hastened thither as fast as he could, and at the sight of the unfortunate man was filled with sorrow; he sent for vinegar and other things to try to revive him; he ran to his room himself and took a piece of chocolate, which he succeeded with difficulty in placing in the mouth of the

dying man. At length, by dint of much pains, he had the happiness to see him come to his senses again, and his heart rejoiced at the sight of the poor man thus restored to life. Ever alive to the wants of his people, Alphonso ordered after this occurrence that liquors and spirituous essences should be always ready in case of need, and that the starving poor who were met in the town should have the very food given them which had been prepared for himself and for his household. The poor had never been allowed to wait at Alphonso's door, but during the famine it was Alphonso who knocked at the door of the poor. He went round the town, and relieved a multitude of miserable creatures, procuring remedies and provisions for them. He begged the monasteries in Naples, and his penitents and relations, to bestow gifts on him for the sick: thus the poor were comforted, and their consolation filled him with unspeakable joy.

When he had nothing more to sell, he thought of getting rid of the plate which had belonged to the bishops his predecessors, of the pastoral cross, the basin, the ewer, and candlestick, as well as the precious stone which adorned the clasp of the cope. "What shall we do," demanded the canons, who dared not openly oppose him, "when you have to celebrate pontifically?" Alphonso replied, "I will use an earthen ewer; is silver, think you, a matter of precept?" Finding that he was resisted, he asked to be allowed at least to pledge these things; but this also was denied him. This second refusal grieved him greatly;

that which he wished to sell did not belong to him, and as he therefore could not order it to be done, he was seen walking about alone in his room, weeping and giving way to all the bitterness of his distress. While in this great sorrow he envied rich bishops, because they had more power to succour the wretched. "Oh, that I merited as much before God as St. Thomas of Villanova," said he one day; "I might find my granaries filled with corn as he did!"

St. Agatha was not the only town which suffered from the calamity: there was a dearth of bread throughout all the diocese, and all had recourse to his Lordship. Gentlemen of the greatest distinction, and even many opulent persons, were often unable to procure any bread. Alphonso had a helping hand for all. The parish priests have attested to me, that there was no place in the diocese which he had not aided with a quantity of corn and lentils, as well as with money. He once sent nine measures of beans to the village of Arpaja alone, as I was told by the incumbent, Don Pascal Lesso. As bishop, he was lord of the fief of Bagnoli; the inhabitants of this domain also demanded his assistance, and more than this, they used menaces. He succeeded in procuring a great quantity of corn from Naples secretly, at six ducats the measure, and he distributed bread to the poor of this estate every day.

The year 1763 was one full of difficulties and pain; the consequences were still more deplorable. New anxieties arose, which put the final

stroke to Alphonso's sorrows; however great was his solicitude, he could not satisfy the wants of all. On the 20th of February, of the year 1764, the horrors of famine became still more felt, and the exasperated people rebelled and chose as the victim of their blind resentment, the syndic Dominico Cervo, who was superintendant of provisions in the town. The unfortunate man retreated into his own house, but the mutinous people, desiring to assassinate him, attacked him there, and broke down his door by the blows of a hatchet. Happily he succeeded in escaping, and he took refuge in the episcopal palace. The seditious people, having heard of this, hurried thither immediately, and without any regard for their bishop, besieged the palace; they penetrated into the interior, and sought for the syndic in order to murder him. Alphonso in alarm appeared before the furious mob, and offered himself as a victim to their anger; he ran into the midst of them, embraced them, pressed them to his heart, and in tears endeavoured to exculpate the syndic. "Life for life!" cried the multitude. Alphonso, not knowing what more he could do to calm the fury of this body of people, whom famine had rendered deaf to all his reasons, distributed to them all the meal and bread which he had kept for the most necessitous poor; besides this he flew to the seminary and distributed to them all the bread and provisions which were there. On this the riot ceased, but Alphonso was not free from disquiet even then. "We have arrived at a great crisis on account

of the scarcity," he wrote to his brother Hercules on the 21st of February. "The day before yesterday, we had a fearful riot, and we apprehend another on Sunday."

This alarm had hardly ended when another arose. The court at Naples, being informed of the revolt which had taken place at St. Agatha, despatched sixty horsemen there, to prevent still more serious disturbances. These measures, far from intimidating the people, only served to exasperate them still more; for the number of inhabitants being thus increased, provisions became in consequence still more scarce. Alphonso, considering this sad state of things, could neither eat nor sleep; he consulted with the superior officers at every moment in order to prevent the soldiers causing inconvenience to any one, while he at the same time negociated at Naples for the recall of the military. He spoke to the most influential among the populace, to urge them to be peaceful, and to tell them how much he compassionated their sufferings. He procured new stores of corn and vegetables, which he distributed to the people, and his active charity took no rest until he saw the soldiers set out and tranquillity re-established. "God knows," he wrote to his brother Hercules on the 21st of February, "in what anxiety I have passed these last days! I have not been able to sleep for several nights."

But he was not satisfied with giving alms; he also had recourse to prayer, and assisted by light from on high, he often foresaw the misfortunes

which would happen even out of the town, and was thus able to obviate them. At Arienzo in particular, he saved Don Ciro Lettieri, the first magistrate of this town from a great disaster. Alphonso had sent for Don Fabricius Lettieri, the treasurer of the college of Arienzo, and brother of the magistrate Ciro, to come to St. Agatha to put the archives of the bishopric in order. Being asked how many days the work would require, Don Fabricius replied that he must have at least a fortnight for it. Eight days had hardly elapsed before Alphonso, though overloaded with occupation, suddenly sent for the treasurer one Saturday, and asked how far he had proceeded in the writings. "I do not know if I shall be able to finish them in a week," replied the treasurer. "No," answered Alphonso, "I wish you to return to Arienzo this very evening, for your presence will be necessary there." He immediately told his servants to get a conveyance ready for him. The treasurer was greatly surprised at receiving such a dismissal, not knowing its cause. He set out therefore but little satisfied with the bishop's proceedings. On the Sunday morning, being at Arienzo, Fabricius heard the sound of the tocsin, he went to the piazza, and found the people, whom famine had rendered desperate, collected together, and with arms in their hands proceeding tumultuously towards his brother's house. The treasurer then understood what that necessity for his presence was of which he had been warned, and he was just in time to save his brother, who but for him would have been

killed. He got before the populace and caused Don Ciro to enter into the monastery of the fathers of St. Augustine, from whence, clothed in a religious habit, he fled from the town and escaped from the attack of the seditious mob, whose number amounted to four or five thousand.

However, the bitter chalice was not yet exhausted; our saint had to drink it even to the dregs. The tribunal of Montefusco, being informed of the tumult which had taken place, commissioned Nicholas Vuolo to seek for the principal rioters. Thirty fathers of families were denounced by the subordinates; they were innocent, but were all obliged to appear at Montefusco. The governors of the town, out of consideration for the ruin of so many families, felt compassion for them, and applied to their common father. At the news Alphonso was filled with grief, and wept over the possible consequences of this denunciation. The Marquis of Monte Verde was president of the court of justice at Montefusco at the time. Alphonso, without loss of time, represented the innocence of the accused to him, and entreated him to stop the prosecution. His representations were so efficacious that the court granted all that he desired. He also foresaw other misfortunes in different parts of the diocese, and he was of great help to a number of unfortunate creatures, afflicted both by famine and by scandalous imputations. St. Agatha had however much less to suffer than the other dioceses in the kingdom, for, while everywhere else bread was from ten to twelve grains the pound, at St. Agatha it only cost six and a half.

CHAPTER XXI.

As the spring of 1764 advanced it brought with it new resources, which at length put an end to the fearful scarcity which had ravaged the country. The holy bishop was able to resume the course of his visitation from this time. Many disorders had arisen during the scourge; some people profited by the general misery to practise usury extensively; others tortured their debtors, and constrained them to subscribe to exaggerated claims. The bishop inveighed against these abuses, and used every means to rectify them. He sent for the merchants and monied men, and enjoined them not to deviate from the rules of equity. After having thus contributed to the restoration of order at St. Agatha and in the neighbouring country, he specially enjoined on the parish priests the relief of many sick persons, convalescents, and the most necessitous families, and then set out to visit the other parts of his diocese. A mother's solicitude for her sucking child equals not that which this saintly pastor felt for his flock; the shouts of joy by which he was greeted in all parts showed plainly the delight which his presence caused in the hearts of the faithful; the poorest, above all, found in him all the tenderness of the most affectionate father.

About this time we were obliged to assemble

at Nocera in a general chapter, in conformity to the prescriptions of our rule, and the saintly founder was begged to preside there. He accepted the invitation, though he was then overcharged with business. "This meeting must take place before the month of October," he wrote to Father Villani on the 4th of July, "because the cold weather will begin then, and it will be time for me to commend my soul to God, for my chest is much oppressed, and what I suffered last winter forces me to be on my guard for the future. I beg you then to pray to God for me; ask him to take pity on an exhausted old man, who can no longer bear the fatigues of the warfare which must be gone through daily in a diocese where disorder is so rampant and inveterate as it is here."

It was then that Alphonso for the first time thought of resigning the burthen of the episcopate, and of retiring to his Congregation for ever. Impressed with the idea that his efforts were inadequate for his office, he wrote to the holy Father, and represented his great age and infirmities to him, and entreated him to consent to his retirement and to give him a successor. He believed he should obtain his request, because he had been told, when he was nominated bishop, that circumstances required that he should accept the episcopate, and that he could renounce it afterwards; but this really meant nothing. He wrote to Father Villani on the 25th of September, "The Pope has answered that I must not think of quitting my diocese; he wishes that, ill as I am, I should govern it, if from

my bed, saying, that that will satisfy him." He went to Nocera towards the end of September; in passing by Nola, he stopped at the seminary, where he had no sooner arrived than Canon Crisci begged him to give an exhortation to the seminarists. Alphonso complied, and, in a discourse which lasted more than an hour, he exhorted the young people to unite themselves to Jesus Christ, and to fly from sin at all times. He had on a former occasion paid his respects to Mgr. Caracciolo; they were delighted to see each other again, and piously conversed together on the affairs of the Church at large, and of their own dioceses in particular. Bishop Caracciolo, as well as our own saint, was an enemy to those pompous titles which were adopted by certain bishops at that time, who mistook the true nature of their functions. He related that having been addressed in a letter from one of his colleagues by the title of Excellency, he had not returned the compliment. "You did very right," replied Alphonso, "I cannot understand what gave rise to this plaguing Excellency. The Council of Trent condescended to grant us the title of Most Reverend, and now they wish to introduce Most Illustrious. If we had wished for Excellency we could have staid at home." When he entered the church to visit the blessed Sacrament, he was given an arm chair which was used by the bishop; he refused it, and placed himself on a bench, saying, "This place befits Don Alphonso," wishing to show that, not being in his own diocese, he ought not to usurp any mark of distinction.

Our Congregation awaited his arrival with impatience, in order that he might preside at the chapter, and he was punctual in coming. But he always feared these assemblies, and never failed to prevent them as far as he could. "He who at another time cannot say anything, and does not deserve to be heard," said he, "becomes a Solomon in chapter, and with one black ball overthrows half a world." The chapter lasted a month; the customs and rules already in vigour were revised and confirmed. Alphonso took the lead in these deliberations, and everything was done in the most satisfactory manner. The chapter had scarcely terminated when the saintly bishop set out for St. Agatha: he longed to rejoin his flock; but his zeal, which was not bounded by the limits of his diocese, had a new enemy to combat about this time.

Father Vincent Patuzzi, a distinguished Dominican, unceasingly criticised the Moral Theology of the saintly doctor. Alphonso on his return from Rome, published a long and learned dissertation, wherein all the most weighty authorities were brought forward in support of his system. This work had so much credit amongst the learned that Father Abbate Prospero Dell' Aquila, a Virginian, did not hesitate to cite it in his "Theological Dictionary," as an admirable master-piece. Father Patuzzi, not being willing to give up the combat, prepared to take up arms again. The librarian Remondini informed his Lordship of his adversary's preparations. The bishop replied, "I am rejoiced that he is going

to attack me, for that will serve to show forth the truth more plainly, which is all I seek for." He wrote to this same Remondini at another time, "If he proves that I am wrong, I am ready to retract." Patuzzi's work was not an erudite refutation, but a libel under the name of Adelphus Dositheus, and entitled, "The cause of probabilism reproduced after the examination of Bishop Liguori, and again convicted of falsity." Alphonso replied in a learned and moderate address, in which he supported his doctrine by the authority of the canons, the holy Fathers, and most celebrated theologians, principally St. Thomas. The distrust he had of his own light led him to seek for that of others; he dedicated his book to his Holiness Pope Clement XIII., with this declaration: "I protest that in all which I have written on this subject, I have no other intention than to make the truth clear in so grave a matter, on which depends the good or evil direction of consciences; and as I had the honour of dedicating my 'Moral Theology' to the Sovereign Pontiff Benedict XIV. some years ago, I venture to present and submit to your Holiness this treatise, which is an appendix to this same 'Moral Theology,' in order that you may deign to look over it, to correct, modify, and cancel all which may be opposed to the maxims of the Gospel and to the rules of Christian wisdom."

In this work, wherein Alphonso has shown great learning, the author's humility and moderation are no less clearly proved. Father Pa-

tuzzi, without regard to the character of the author of the "Morals," treated him as a petty writer, ignorant even of first principles. He used such expressions as the following: "It is impossible to understand how you can have so far mistaken the doctrine of St. Thomas. ..... Study these questions better, in order that you may not be exposed to the raillery of those who understand them.....You have no just ideas on these things.....You ought to blush," &c. &c. Alphonso, far from taking offence at these invectives, thanked Patuzzi, and was satisfied with only proving the falsity of his criticisms; but his adversary, with a ridiculous impertinence, only replied to these refutations by calling them calumnies. He replied to him as follows: "If you think that I have calumniated you, what do you wish me to say to you? I beg your pardon, unfortunate that I am! I am abused, and then accused of being the culprit."

Alphonso sent this Apology to the bishops and archbishops, as well as to the theological doctors. All united with one voice in praising the system he had defended with such moderation, and in reproving Adelphus for his ill-regulated zeal. Bishop Coppola, of Castellamare, wrote to Alphonso, "My Lord, I assure you with all sincerity, that I know not whether your modesty or your learning have appeared to me the more admirable. All the world in general, and each one in particular, sees equally that you write from love of the truth, and not from a thoughtless

wish to triumph over your adversaries." As to the works of Patuzzi, they did him great injury, and Father Longobardi, superior of the Congregation of Pious Workmen, assures us that his partisans themselves blamed his manner of writing. Bishop Albertini of Caserto, said one day, "I confess in all sincerity that Patuzzi's indecorous style makes me indignant. In the Apology, on the contrary, I see an edifying spirit of moderation, which knows how to mortify, reprove, and instruct with charity. I hope that others will adopt a style so worthy of the humility and charity commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ." Mgr. Mastrilli, archbishop of Tarento, expresses himself on this subject in the following terms: "I confess that the Apology, in my opinion, perfectly corresponds with the dissertation, and just as the Abbate D'Aquila said that this latter work was a master-piece, so I also call the Apology a master-piece, not only on account of the theological learning which one must see in it, but also because it teaches Catholic controversialists that Christian charity which should be observed in all arguments."

The same feeling was expressed by other bishops of the kingdom of Sicily and the States of the Church.

The Apology* was scarcely printed, before it was spread throughout Italy. "Remondini has

* If any one wishes to have farther information about the letters which contained these approbations, he will find the greater portion quoted by Alphonso himself at the end of his Apology.

told me," Alphonso wrote to Father Villani, "that my book has been received in the most favourable manner. It is already known and sought for throughout all the kingdom. I beg your Reverence to order our young people to read it, because I do not approve of their relying on my words blindly without taking the trouble to study them; it would then be to be feared, that not being prepared, they would be unable to defend my opinion and their own, if they found themselves attacked by the innovators of our age; they ought to know how to reply; yet I fear that those belonging to us will read other things than my Apology, and that they will be incapable to refute the objections by which some will endeavour to embarrass them." Every one believed, with Alphonso, that the Dominican father would be open to conviction, but this was not at all the case, and in presence of a number of opposers he would not confess that he was vanquished. He sharpened his pen anew, and published another libel, which contained the same abuse as his former writings, only under another form. Alphonso, without departing from his usual moderation, replied to him on the 16th of January, 1764: "I have received your well-meant letter, wherein are mingled praises and counsels, admonitions, reproaches, and menaces." Then, after having apologised for not being able to reply more at length, on account of the business of the diocese, he adds, "You tell me that you are astonished, that, while leading an edifying life, (you had better have said that I de-

ceive the public), I notwithstanding profess an erroneous doctrine. My father, I judge and see precisely the contrary; I see that my life is neither good nor exemplary, but full of faults, and on the contrary I am sure that my system is very wise and certain."· After this he continued to overthrow his adversary's objections with admirable skill and learning, and he supported his arguments principally by St. Thomas and other celebrated writers.

Father Patuzzi had compared him to the Calvinists; "For as they maintain," said he, "that it is easier to be saved in their sect, which denies the necessity of good works, so you say that it is easiest to be saved in your system, which denies the necessity of following the most certain opinions." Alphonso replied, "A great many thanks for the honour your Reverence has conferred on me in comparing my Apology to a blasphemy of Calvin. Has this opinion of Calvin's the smallest moral certainty? What do I say? it is not even probable; much more—it is certainly false, and contrary to the teaching of the Catholic Church. What relation is there then between holding an opinion certainly false in a matter of faith, and in holding an opinion morally certain in morals?" Adelphus had spoken to him of the terrible judgments of God. "I confess," said Alphonso to him, "that I am not a saint, but a poor sinner, and do really tremble in thinking of the account I shall have to render to God, for having corresponded so ill to such great mercy; but I do not tremble on

account of the opinion I have defended. I am tranquil and certain that this opinion cannot damn me, because I hold it to be irrefutable, and I shall continue to believe it such until your Reverence or others have convinced me to the contrary." Father Patuzzi had concluded his letter by warnings; Alphonso also ended his by good advice: "As your Reverence," said he, "counsels me to reflect and to see if I am not guilty before God, for having maintained too indulgent an opinion, permit me, before I conclude my letter, to invite you also, as you are constantly administering the sacrament of penance to so many persons, to examine whether you will not have to give a severer account to God than I, for having followed the rigorous opinion by which you have embarrassed the consciences of your penitents, and have forced them to hold as certainly unlawful that which was not so; in consequence of which, you may have caused many formal sins to be committed which were not such before God, and occasioned the damnation of many souls." Patuzzi's conduct convinced every one that he only acted through party spirit, and that it was useless to take any farther pains in refuting him. "If he attacks you again," Mgr. Sabbabatino, bishop of Aquila, wrote to Alphonso, "let him talk on; for my part I believe he will hold his tongue; otherwise it will seem that he thinks to win the cause through sophisms and insults." Bishop Coppola of Castellamare also wrote to him, "If your adversary will not be silent, I think, my Lord, that you will do well to pay no

farther attention to it, for you may see that as he is under the influence of party spirit, there is no farther hope of causing him to see the truth."

Many other prelates expressed themselves in a similar way, amongst whom I will only cite the bishop of Tarento. "I read in your Apology with pleasure," he wrote to his saintly colleague, "that you have resolved not to reply farther to answers which a spirit opposed to the love of the truth may still dictate." In fine, Father Patuzzi was conquered, but not convinced, and thus the controversy ended.

CHAPTER XXII.

When Alphonso had made himself thoroughly acquainted with the state of his diocese, he informed the Pope that he thought he ought to assemble a synod, in order to remedy numerous abuses, and, supported by the approbation of his Holiness, to regulate many things by statute which he judged necessary. The Pope heard his determination with pleasure, and to favour his undertaking, and in order that so pious a work might bear the more fruit, he granted, by his brief of the 21st of June, cum sicut accepimus, a plenary indulgence to whoever, after having confessed, should communicate and visit the cathedral of St. Agatha on the opening day of the synod, and also every year on its anniversary.

I was then at St. Agatha; Alphonso wished me to repair to Naples to consult Bishop Borgia of Aversa about this matter, as well as Father Don Janviero Fatigati, the founder of the Congregation of the Holy Family. They both disapproved of the project from valid reasons, and their opinion was shared by several bishops who were friends of our saint. On returning to St. Agatha, I communicated to him the opinion of Bishop Borgia, and that of Father Fatigati. He reflected on them for some time and then replied to me: "I will accomplish what I wished to regulate in a synod, by simple decrees, and thus I shall not have to fear some unquiet spirit preventing my obtaining the royal assent at Naples." After having abandoned his first plan, he consulted several times the most judicious members of his clergy, particularly the archdeacon and other dignitaries belonging to the chapter; he also took the advice of several gentlemen, and thus the articles which he had prepared for the synodical assembly were replaced by six ordinances, which he promulgated in due form, and caused to be rigorously observed throughout the diocese.

The first decree referred to the canons, to the priests of the cathedral, and to the chaplains. Ecclesiastical discipline of the choir was generally very ill observed at St. Agatha, as well as in the collegiate establishments, so the bishop, on the authority of the bull which Pope Benedict XIV. addressed to Cardinal Delfino, patriarch of Aquileja, showed that neither the daily distribu-

tions nor the prebendal revenues could be gained without chanting and saying the psalms in the manner ordered by the Church; that also it was impossible for him, without grievously burdening his conscience, to allow the absent to have a part in that which is only due to those who assist in the choir. He told them to recite the psalms with devotion and to observe the pauses; he subjected to severe correction those who did not observe silence in choir; he wished, that after the office had commenced, no one should be able to go out, except to hear confessions or to celebrate the divine mysteries; that several masses should not be said at the same time, but that the priests should succeed each other seasonably, to produce the greatest amount of utility for the people. He also exacted that whoever did not assist at the office and mass for the dead on All Souls' Day and the two following days, which were consecrated as anniversaries of deceased bishops and canons, should be severely censured.

He insisted on the prudence which the holy Council of Trent desires to be used when any necessity occurs of providing a substitute to fill a place in the choir. He also brought forward the decrees of the Sacred Congregation on the same subject.

Wishing to insure freedom of voting in the chapter, he ordered that in grave matters which concerned either the entire body, or some particular member of the cathedral or college, the opinions should not be taken aloud or tumultuously, but by means of secret ballots, which

should be collected by one of the capitulars; and that in cases where there was disagreement as to the gravity of the matter in deliberation, the question should be resolved by the archdeacon or by the president of the chapter.

The second ordinance refers to the duties of the archpriests, vicars, and rectors throughout the diocese. The ignorance of children on the essential points of religion, and the negligence of the parish priests in instructing them, were a sword of sorrow to the soul of the pious bishop. For this reason he renewed the order given after his first visitation, and required that the summary of Christian doctrine composed by himself should be read twice to the people on every feast day, once at the parochial mass, and the other time at some other mass equally frequented. He ordered the same thing to be done by priests who celebrated mass in rural chapels.

He ordered that on every Sunday morning the parish priests should give a detailed instruction on the truths of the faith, especially to the little children, besides the recital of this little treatise, and that for this they should obtain the aid of other priests and clerics of the same parish, and that if the incumbent were prevented doing this himself, through some serious indisposition, he should at least try to be present at it in order to be sure that this sacred duty was properly performed. He wished that children should be made to know the meaning of the words their lips uttered, as far as their capacities would allow; and that they should be taught the acts

for the holy communion for several weeks before Easter, in order to cause them to understand well the importance of this sacrament, the benefits it procures, and the dispositions it requires. He complained of having found children fourteen and fifteen years of age who had not yet made their first communion, and wished that they should be admitted to this sacrament, for the future, when nine or ten years old, or at most twelve years. He directed that these children should be taught the acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition with particular care, and that they should be made to understand how necessary these acts are to salvation. From the desire of inculcating on all the necessity of prayer, which is such a great means of grace, he advised the parish priests to be very careful to try to convince old and young of this truth, and that no one can be saved nor obtain God's aid under temptation, if he does not ask for it humbly by prayer.

In order to remedy more and more the great ignorance which existed in the diocese, even in persons of good station, in regard to the things of faith, he ordered that all who wished to enter into matrimony should be examined on the most essential points, and this indispensably and without distinction. In this he also acted in concurrence with the doctrine of Pope Benedict XIV., and he desired that no one, whoever he might be, should obtain permission to marry, if the curé did not affirm on oath that the person was well instructed in all those things which a good

Christian ought to know. Alphonso attached great importance to this, and it was not an uncommon thing to see him refuse this sacrament to persons who had not fulfilled these conditions.

In this same ordinance he set before the parochial clergy their strict obligation of preaching every Sunday. "It is in that," said he, "that the care of the sheep principally consists; it is that which Jesus Christ has so many times recommened to all pastors in the person of St. Peter; to fail in this precept is to refuse the flock the food which it requires." He warned the curés that the omission of this duty for an entire month, or frequent interruptions during three months, would render them guilty of mortal sin. He wished that, according to the direction of the Council of Trent, preaching should be familiar and level to the people's capacities. He strongly recommended the frequent repetition of eternal truths, and the showing forth the gravity of sacrilege, and that once a month, to do away with false shame in confessions, a strange confessor should come to the parish. In order to prevent serious evils, which happen only too often, he obliged the parish priests to receive no promises of betrothal without the certainty of a speedy celebration of marriage. He also wished that parents should be repeatedly advised not to receive young men into their house who might prove an occasion of scandal to their daughters, and that they should be reminded that this point is a reserved case with excommunication.

He also repeated the precept regarding Easter communion, and he ordered that no one should be admitted to communion without having been previously examined by his parish priest on the things necessary to salvation; he also forbade confessors to administer this sacrament to those who were not provided with a certificate. The incumbent was obliged to number all his parishioners, and to give a ticket to each, the presentation of which caused them to be admitted to the holy communion; and when paschal time had elapsed the same priest collected together all the tickets, to see who had obeyed the command and who had not: these tickets were not to be received by any other priest. The same rule further prescribed. that those who had not fulfilled their paschal duty should be warned, that they would incur excommunication if they did not do so and in their parish church: communicating in the cathedral did not shelter them from this severe sentence. He ordered that if any person should not have performed this duty by Trinity Sunday, the incumbent should then report it to the bishop, without delay, whoever it might happen to be. Besides the paschal duty, the holy bishop thought the young of both sexes have need of being fortified by the nourishment of the eucharistic food at other times: he ordered two general communions, the one on the Sunday during the octave of the assumption, and the other at Christmas. The cause of this regulation was, that he felt how impossible it is to take too much pains about young people, for if they do not conceive

a great love for this divine Sacrament at an early period they will only have a distaste for it at a later time. He wished that acts of preparation for the reception of this sacrament should be suggested to them the evening before, and that the graces which it brings with it, and the strength it gives against falling away, should be explained to them. He had also to repair very great negligences in regard to the Holy Viaticum and to Extreme Unction. He warned the parish priests never to omit the administration of the Viaticum every time a sick person was in danger of death, and to give Extreme Unction, according to the directions of Benedict XIV., every time any serious illness occurred. The parish priests were reminded, that, according to the Roman Catechism, they sinned grievously if they did not administer Extreme Unction till the dying person has lost the use of his senses.

There was also much abuse in the way of fulfilling the obligations of perpetual masses. In order to remedy this the incumbents, rectors, and other priests were ordered to have a list in the sacristy, in which should be noted, together with the founders' names, the days and the altars at which these masses ought to be celebrated. "If the dead can no longer watch over their own interests," said Alphonso, "it is for us to take care of them. This list ought to be exposed so as to be seen by all incumbents, to avoid any forgetfulness." It was ordered that when a legacy was left in favour of a church, the payment should be required from the heirs in a month after the

death of the testator, and that in case of refusal recourse should be had to a competent judge to compel them, or else the bishop should be informed of the refusal. It was forbidden to accept of any legacy without first informing the bishop, who had to decide whether it was right to accept it, and whether the priests of the church to which the bequest was made could satisfy the conditions imposed by the testator. Besides this, it was prescribed that a list of the foundations should be made every ten years, and of which one copy was to be remitted to the heirs, and the other deposited in the hands of the chapter. The bishop was also to be immediately informed of the death of benefactors by the rural deans.

One article of this same ordinance enjoined, that a list of reserved cases should be read to the people at mass on Holy Thursday. Another suppressed the serious abuse of giving to the clergy, and much more to the laity, the keys of the holy sepulchre. And further, it was made of strict obligation not to entrust the holy oil, which had to be sent from the cathedral to the parochial clergy, to any but priests, or at least to clerics in holy orders.

On the authority of Pope Benedict XIV. the holy bishop reminded the incumbents of the obligation they were under, 1st, To say mass for the people on all Sundays and feast-days, notwithstanding any abuse or custom to the contrary, and this too even if they had not a sufficient revenue; 2ndly, To warn any of their parishioners whom they knew to be living in mortal sin, or to

be in imminent danger of falling into it, even though it were at the risk of their own lives, and this not only in cases of extreme necessity, but every time that a grave sin was in question; and in order to excite the incumbents' zeal as much as possible, he threatened to punish their negligence by depriving them of the proceeds of their benefice.

The last decree of this second ordinance was to repress the abuses of which we have already spoken in regard to residence. The holy bishop warned the incumbents that they could not remain absent from their parishes without some urgent cause and without the approbation of the bishop, whose approval they must also obtain for those whom they wished to be their substitutes, and that whoever should not attend to this rule would commit a grave sin, and would be bound to give up the proceeds of his living during the time of his absence to the poor of the parish or to the funds of the Church. He looked on those who neglected their principal duties as equally culpable, and punished them with the same penalty, and this must be understood, according to the decree of the Council of Trent, of those who remain for two months without preaching and administering the sacraments. In fine, he strictly charged the incumbents to live in the presbytery or a neighbouring house, in order to be ready to attend to their parishioners with promptness.

Alphonso addressed the third regulation to all confessors, secular and regular. He reminded

them of the necessity they lay under to study moral theology; he showed them that it is not enough for a confessor to have obtained the faculties requisite, but he must also possess the knowledge which these difficult functions demand. He ordered them to belong to some congregation for discussing cases of conscience, the secretaries of which were bound to let him know, at the end of June and December, the names of those who had failed to attend the meetings.

He ordered them not to omit to ask parents if they sent their children to be catechised, and to refuse them absolution if they would not do it, warning them of its being a reserved case; and not to admit any of the faithful to confession in paschal time who were uninstructed in points of faith, and not provided with the certificate of their parish priest.

He especially wished the confessors to interrogate those who confessed seldom, or whose consciences were not known to them. He told them to refuse absolution to any one who was in a proximate and voluntary occasion of sin, until the penitent had quitted the occasion; and in case of necessity the absolution was to be deferred at least until this occasion had changed from proximate to remote. He also caused absolution to be refused to the young of both sexes who court each other and live under the same roof, though no evil had been known to come of it. "That which has not yet been done, may be done," said his Lordship. He wished above all that absolution should be refused to heads of families

who permitted such intercourse, and that they should be reminded of the excommunication they incurred, and of its being a reserved case.

He enjoined confessors not to absolve backsliding or habitual sinners, especially blasphemers, except they gave extraordinary signs of contrition.

The physicians caused him much uneasiness on account of the great number of sick people who died without the sacraments, or who did not receive them until they had lost the use of their senses. He inculcated on confessors the duty of reminding physicians of the strict obligation which the bull of Pope Pius V. imposed on them, of ordering the sacraments to be administered to those of their patients whom they found after a third visit to be in danger or likely to become so; and they were also to be reminded that if they met with sick people who resisted this, they ought, according to the same bull, to cease to visit them until they had satisfied the wants of their soul.

He condemned the facility with which many confessors grant absolution to venial sins, without being certain that the penitent repents of them and is resolved to amend; he wished that in case of doubt the penitent should accuse himself of some grave sin already confessed, in order to be sure that there was matter for the sacrament. He also warned them not to impose a penance under pain of mortal sin when they foresaw difficulty in its accomplishment. He advised confessors to exhort their penitents to frequent

prayer; above all, if they often fell into mortal sin, to recommend them to invoke the sacred names of Jesus and Mary unceasingly in temptation, and often to ask God's grace in order that they might persevere in virtue. He charged them to teach briefly the exercise of mental prayer to those whom they saw were most disposed to piety, especially to the young of both sexes. He exhorted them above all to inculcate devotion to our Blessed Lady, the recitation of the Rosary, as well as three Aves night and morning in invocation of the Mother of perseverance.

After this followed the third ordinance, which only regarded secular priests. He wished them all to join a congregation of cases of conscience, and told them the way in which they ought to conduct themselves therein. Confessors who wished to have their faculties continued were to exhibit proofs of their assiduity at the conferences, otherwise they would be excluded from all claim to benefices, and would not be permitted to be candidates for vacant parishes.

Alphonso renewed the threat of suspension *ipso facto* for all who should finish mass, even one of requiem, or a votive one of the Blessed Virgin, in less than a quarter of an hour. He reminded them of the serious obligation they were under of saying masses due for the living within the space of two months, and within one month for the dead. He recommended them to make a suitable preparation for mass, and not to neglect to offer up a thanksgiving of a quarter of an hour at least, if not half an hour. He strictly

prohibited all sort of conversation in going to or from the sacristy when vested; an abuse which many fell into without scruple.

He ordered the rectors of churches to have a book in the sacristy, in which the masses which had been founded were to be distinctly noted down, with the names of the testators, and he wished that as these masses were said, a note should be made of it in the registry. In accordance with the wishes of Pope Benedict XIV. he gave directions for the crucifix to be placed upon the altar during mass in such a position that it might be seen by the people.

He reminded them of the suspension *ipso facto* which all in holy orders incur by amusing themselves at games of chance, such as cards, dice, or such like; the same penalty would be incurred for any other game in which they engaged publicly. He equally forbade hunting with a gun or nets, at least without the written permission of the bishop, which never extended to days of obligation. He forbade acting in comedies, even if the piece were a sacred one, and it were done in a private house, under pain of suspension if the cleric were in holy orders, and of disability to receive them if he were still in minor orders. He also forbade them to be present at the award of the contracts for farming the excise and the other taxes, or to take any part in it, even indirectly, under a borrowed name, or in concert with others.

Lastly, he exhorted all the clerics to second their parish priests in the instructions on Chris-

tian doctrine, and promised to befriend them in the collations to livings, &c.

The sixth decree (we shall speak of the fifth in the chapter on candidates for ordination) aims at providing for that which was becoming in regard to the clerical dress and tonsure. In virtue of the bull of Pope Alexander III. he forbade the hair to be studiously arranged, curled, or perfumed; it was to be worn flat, without covering the neck or the ears; the clerics were obliged to wear it short like the seminarists, under pain of being excluded from orders. The priest's tonsure was to be of the size of a large host; it was to be smaller for deacons, and so on in proportion for the inferior clergy, but in no case should it be less than a small host; and all were to have it renewed every fifteen days.

It was forbidden to wear a coloured great coat or cloak; he permitted it however in the country or in travelling, but only to priests, and provided the great coat was not trimmed with galloon or other ornaments. He also forbade shirt ruffles, and plaited lace called "girandoles."

He ordered all the clerics in minor orders to wear in town nothing but the cassock quite closed in front, and not like a zimarra; and when they presented themselves for ordination they were obliged to have a certificate from their parish priest, attesting that they had worn no other dress since they received the first orders.

In conclusion, it was prescribed that priests should wear the cassock, according to the decree of the canons, from the month of May to the

month of October inclusively, under pain of suspension *ipso facto:* but from the month of November until the end of April they were allowed to have short habits, on account of the bad weather and the quantity of mud in the streets, especially if they had to celebrate the sacred offices in distant places.

Such is the summary of the decisions which Bishop Liguori felt it necessary to make for the good of his clergy and diocese, although he did not hold a synod. He confessed that, in consequence of the circumstances of the times, he had not acted after the rigour of the ancient canons, but he also declared that in proportion to his indulgence from this cause would be his severity towards transgressors. "Any kind of contempt for myself does not affect me at all," said he; "on the contrary, I thank God for it; but I cannot suffer any disregard for my ordinances." It was because he considered their execution as the basis and foundation of the good which he desired to preserve in his Church, and of the reforms which he intended to introduce into it. He therefore was very attentive in watching to see that they were kept, and not satisfied with the reports which were addressed to him by the vicars, who were specially bound to attend to what went on in the different parts of the diocese, he commissioned certain persons to inform him privately of all kinds of infraction of these ordinances. When he saw that the offences were in consequence of contempt of his wishes, he acted with severity, and more than

one parish priest suffered an exemplary punishment in consequence. One was deprived of the revenues of his parish; another, for having twice failed to be present at the meetings of the discussion of moral cases, was sent for by the bishop, who reprimanded him with severity, keeping him standing while the interview lasted. Canon Verzalla, who was a witness of this scene, and was at that time secretary to the bishop, told me that he heard him say, that nothing pained him more than the neglect of the conferences on moral cases and of the Saturday sermon in honour of the most Blessed Virgin.

CHAPTER XXIII.

One of the greatest evils which Alphonso remarked during his pastoral visitation, was the spiritual abandonment in which thousands of souls were to be found who were dispersed about the country, and above all, in the neighbourhood of St. Agatha. The population of this town and its environs amounted to more than twenty-four thousand inhabitants, who were scattered about in a number of villages, hamlets, and farm-houses. In the suburbs and villages there were not less than two hundred families, who comprised all together more than thirteen hundred souls.

This considerable population, who lived some miles from the town, formed what is called the parish of St. Thomas; it is divided into several sections separated from each other. Some of these sections are four or five miles from the church, which occasions serious inconveniences, for while the heat of summer causes the access to church to be very painful, winter renders it nearly impossible. Snow and rain, the torrents, and above all, the bad state of the roads, were sufficient reasons for a great number to exempt themselves from assisting at mass; in a word, the old and very young never saw their parish priest. There was no catechising for the young, nor instruction for the adults; and what is worse, nearly all the sick were deprived of the Viaticum and Extreme Unction. Alphonso grieved over such a deplorable state of things; he wept over it before God, and with his peace of mind he also lost his sleep. He often assembled the most respectable members of the chapter together, to ask their advice, and to seek for some means of remedying so great an evil; but they were all content to sigh over a state of things which they believed themselves unable to change. The vigilant bishop examined into the numerous benefices of Santa Vita. As they were all of free gift, and till then had only been conferred on clerics attached to the bishop, or on strangers, he determined to divide the parish of St. Thomas, and to form three others, which should be supported by means of these benefices. The execution of this project was far from being an

easy matter, but our saint's zeal and constancy triumphed over all obstacles. The situation of the places led him to establish a parish connected with the ancient church of St. Peter, surnamed of Romagnano, which is a mile from the farm-houses of Lovanio, in which there are more than four hundred souls. He joined to them the country places or villages called Fagnano, Lamia, and Albaneso. He formed a second parish around the Church of the Annunciation, which was more than four miles from that of St. Thomas. This parish extends to the confines of Durazzano and of Bagnoli, and embraces the small towns called la Rocca, la Porta di Ferrari, and la Peschievia, which contain altogether more than ninety-three families, or six hundred souls. This church belongs to the town of St. Agatha. The bishop did not let the magistrates rest until they had agreed to establish a parish priest there. He founded a third parish in union with a church dedicated to St. Michael, in the village of Laiano. This latter was the most distant from the parish of St. Thomas, and there were more than four hundred souls in it who had no spiritual assistance whatever.

These three parishes being thus formed, all the other little hamlets of Faggiano, Verruni, Cologna, and Cerreto, with the country about Piscitelli and Cotugni, remained attached to the ancient parish of St. Thomas, though they even were two miles from this church. It was thus that Alphonso provided for the wants of these destitute souls. He succeeded in endowing them

with considerable revenues, in order that the best priests might be willing to go there, and might have no pretext for exempting themselves from perfectly fulfilling the duties of their sacred ministry.

There is a place called Cancello, within three miles of Arienzo, the environs of which are peopled by a great number of families, who are all dispersed about in various estates. It is said that this was formerly the rural district of the ancient Suessola, and the curé who serves the church has even now the title of archpriest. As Cancello is dependant on the parish of St. Felix of Arienzo, which is four miles distant at the least, the inhabitants for the most part died without any religious aid. Alphonso was distressed at this serious evil, and after he had searched into the records, he resolved to make a parochial chapel of the one which is to be found there, and which is dedicated to St. Peter. The Duke of Maddalon possessed large farms on this domain. This pious nobleman was willing to concur in the execution of the bishop's project. Philip, count of Cerreto, the young duke's tutor, followed his example. His Lordship on finding himself thus seconded, hastened to begin the work and to establish a baptistry there; but he was hindered by the opposition of Vincent Mauro, archpriest of Cancello and incumbent of St. Nicholas, in the village of St. Mary de Vico. It became necessary to proceed in another manner. The duke gave twelve ducats yearly for the celebration of mass at Cancello on Sundays and festivals,

and in order that the same priest might consent to preach there and teach the catechism to the children, the bishop assigned him six ducats out of his own income; he presented a beautiful missal to the church, as well as other books for the celebration of the offices, and he promised the priest besides not to forget him when a vacancy should occur in the livings.

At the foot of Mount Tifati, which is also dependant on Arienzo, are to be found the villages of Carpinetto, Crisci, Busciano, and Signorminico, which contain more than eight hundred souls, whose dwellings are very distant from each other, and more than a mile from the parish of St. Andrew. The inundations which devastate this part of the country during winter, also prevent the inhabitants from hearing mass, and deprive them of the sacraments. Alphonso resolved to establish a church in the village of Crisci, which is situated in the centre of them, to place the Blessed Sacrament there, and to make it a chapel of ease for the archpriest of St. Andrew. He obtained some ground from the chapter; he himself gave the sum of twenty ducats, and the faithful of these places undertook the building of the church themselves. The walls were already built up very high, and all promised to be soon finished, when his Lordship was attacked by a serious illness, and was obliged to leave this work unfinished, to his great regret; and the inhabitants, not knowing how to appreciate the results of this undertaking, ceased to labour at it.

There was also a hermitage at Arienzo, which

belonged to the see, and was dedicated to St. Mark. As it is surrounded with numerous villages, and is about two miles from the parish of St. Nicholas, and three from that of St. Felix, the faithful of these places also awakened the solicitude of their bishop. He ordered Don Dominic Piscitelli, who went there to celebrate mass on all festivals, to give a sermon and to catechise at the same time, and, besides the fee which was allowed to him for the mass, he assigned six ducats to him.

There were a great number of souls on the estate of Frascio who could not easily receive spiritual assistance on account of their distance from church; he wished to obviate this by dividing the parish, and by placing in a church which already existed there a rector, whose parish should be dependant on the mother church. The archpriest opposed this in the most obstinate manner; he even had recourse to the prince, and positively refused to contribute anything towards the salary of the rector, or to the things necessary for the service of the church. Alphonso was in nowise discouraged. "Please to say to the archpriest," he wrote to the head of the chapter, Petti, "that if he will not yield, I am resolved to pursue the matter, and I believe that I have the right of establishing at least a chapel of ease for the spiritual good of these people, so that they may be able to go to confession in the neighbourhood, to hear a sermon every Sunday, to pay a visit to the blessed Sacrament, and to perform novenas and other exercises of devotion.

I am certain none of these things are practised at present, on account of the great distance and the mountainous route which they must take, above all in bad weather. The expense will not stop me, even though it should amount to four or five hundred ducats, because I think that the glory of God is concerned. Represent all these things to him properly, and try to prevail on him by gentleness, otherwise we shall be able to do nothing, because the man is obstinate, always loaded with debt, and does not like to spend money except after his own fancy." Alphonso however could not bring his plan to a happy termination on account of the great impediments which unexpectedly arose in his way, but still more on account of his resignation of the episcopacy.

Our saint's zeal was not even satisfied by having provided for the good of so many souls by his wise regulations; for if he had been able, he would have given a pastor to each of his sheep: he was careful that in many other rural chapels, which were distant from the parish churches, the word of God should never fail to be heard. "If the ear is not struck," said he, "the door of the heart does not open." He himself supplied what was necessary for the maintenance of these chaplains, as they have themselves testified, and especially Dominic Moscati and Joseph Piscitelli.

We should never have done were we to relate all the measures which the holy bishop employed for the advantage of parishes. A number of churches, where the revenues were inadequate,

were by his care endowed with rentals and benefices, taken from several others which were superabundantly provided. By these means he attracted a number of meritorious priests, who till then had been kept at a distance through fear and distress.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Alphonso became ill at the close of the disastrous year 1764, exhausted with austerity and fatigue. The fever made such rapid progress, that his life was shortly despaired of, and they hastened to administer the Viaticum and Extreme Unction to him. Every one was greatly affected at seeing the Bishop of St. Agatha die on straw, between two sheets of coarse cloth, and covered with all the emblems of poverty. The Dominican Father, Caputo, assisted him on one side, and the Dean, Evangelist Daddio, on the other; the sick man with a dying voice asked them to suggest some sentiments of love to him. The Dominican Father tried to suggest some holy thought, but tears stifled his voice, and he could not utter a single word. The dean then said to him, "My Lord, when St. Martin was near death, he addressed the following prayer to God: 'Lord, if I am still of use to Thy people, I refuse not to work;'" and Alphonso who could scarcely move his lips, immediately repeated, "Non recuso laborem."

No children ever wept more bitterly at the sight of a father's death-bed, than the inhabitants of St. Agatha did at the prospect of so soon losing their bishop. His charity for his people had been shown in so touching a manner during the famine, that the poor especially seemed as if they would do violence to Heaven by their cries to obtain the recovery of their common father's health. Public prayers were had in every place throughout the diocese. Several religious communities at Naples offered up novenas and other prayers in common and in particular, in order that the Lord would deign to restore the pastor to his diocese, or rather to the whole Church, which was interested in his preservation.

As the invalid's danger had been seen from the first, it was proposed to send for a physician from Naples, but he would not hear of it, saying that his life was not worth so much trouble, and that he ought to employ the physicians of St. Agatha, since God had given them to him. Nevertheless, his brother Hercules was no sooner informed of his state than he came to see him, accompanied by two of the first doctors of the capital. The bishops of the neighbourhood were not the only ones who hastened to visit the holy prelate. Bishop Borgia and Bishop Pallante of San Severo hurried from Naples, where they were at the time. Many distinguished persons both in and out of the diocese were equally concerned about his health. The Chevalier Negroni sent an express once every day from Caserto to

inquire for him. Alphonso required quinine, and he himself undertook to procure him some of the best quality, the same as what the king used. Alphonso escaped from death at last, but it may truly be said that his recovery was a recompense for the tears of the poor, and it was plainly seen that God wished, for the salvation of his flock, to preserve his life, of which they had still the greatest need.

God manifested His servant's sanctity during his illness by a miracle. One day while he was still in bed, he received a visit from the canon, Don Charles Bumon, who brought him some fig-peckers which he had shot. He was accompanied by his nephew, who, although about four years old, could not say a single word. The little child presented the birds to his Lordship, who told the brother who waited on him to give him some sweet-meats, and addressing the canon, asked what was his nephew's name; the uncle replied that the child was called Thomas, but that he could not yet speak, and that they believed he would continue to be dumb. His Lordship immediately made the sign of the cross on the child's forehead, and taking a picture of our Lady of Power, of whom there were several engravings near his bed, he gave it to Thomas to kiss, and asked him what this Lady was called. The child kissed the picture, and his tongue being unloosed at the moment, he replied, "The Madonna." Alphonso turned to the canon, and to conceal the miracle, said to him, "This child is not dumb; it is true that

there is an impediment in his speech, but you will see that it will gradually disappear." From that time the child recovered the use of speech, in fact, he articulated every sound perfectly, and asked for all that he wanted. All St. Agatha wondered at the miracle, and conceived a still higher opinion of their bishop than before.

The doctors foreseeing the tediousness of his recovery, and fearing that if he were not entirely set up before the autumn, he would languish all the winter, advised him to go for a change to the more salubrious air of Nocera. This proposition alarmed him. "I cannot go far from my residence," said he; "let us place ourselves in the hands of the Lord, and He will do the rest." Father Villani was then at St. Agatha; every one with one accord tried to induce him to use his authority over his penitent, and it required a command from the holy priest to cause Alphonso to consent to go to Nocera.

From the time that Alphonso was among the congregation again, he never failed, even though not well, to follow all the exercises of the community the same as the rest; he resumed his scientific occupations at the same time without allowing himself a moment's relaxation. Don Joseph Messina, a priest and his confidant, asked him to play the harpsichord one day. "What will be said," replied his Lordship, "if I pass my time at an idle instrument in place of employing it in thinking of my diocese? My duty and that of every bishop is to give audience to all, to pray, to study, and never to play the harpsichord."

He was constantly visited by ecclesiastics and gentlemen who wished to profit by his counsels or to enjoy his conversation. Bishop Borgia de la Cava often came to converse with him, and Bishop Volpé of Nocera came still more frequently, so that one may say that he hardly knew how to steal the time he required for the works he had undertaken. He preached a sermon in our church each Saturday in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and from time to time he was called on to give familiar instructions to nuns in their convents. The rector caused him to be treated with some distinction in regard to food, not because he was a bishop, but because of his indisposition; these attentions were a martyrdom to the founder of the congregation. He wished to have no distinction whatever made between himself and the rest of the community, and the Lord, to second his wishes in some degree, permitted him to suffer on one occasion a mortifying neglect. Alphonso ate in an upper room, and as he did not take wine, he asked for a glass of water; the brother who was waiting on him saw a vase which was full of it, and presented it to him; Alphonso took it and drank it without any notice, but Father Apicelli, who was beside him, smelt a bad odour, and saw that the vase was filled with corrupted water, which had been used for keeping flowers in a few days before. Alphonso did not show any displeasure, or say a word to find fault with one who had waited on him so badly.

Once when he was saying mass in the domes-

tic chapel of Mary of Sorrows, and had come to the Psalm Judica me Deus, he cast his eyes on the statue, and suddenly broke off and stopped in the middle of the words he had commenced. Father Siviglia, who served his mass, thinking he was distracted, wished to recall him to the place again; he said the end of the verse, but Alphonso did not say a word; the father repeated it a second and a third time without success; at last he raised his eyes, and saw that Alphonso was in an ecstasy. It was not till after the father had shaken him several times by pulling him by the albe that he continued the Psalm.

Though far from St. Agatha, the holy bishop had the wants of his diocese before him at every instant; and as he wished to be informed of everything, couriers set out from Nocera constantly, and others arrived there from his grand-vicar and the parish priests of the district. Many among the laity also had recourse to him. One day he received as many as eight couriers, to all of whom he gave an answer, so that one matter was hardly ended ere he began another.

One day when he was conversing with Bishop Volpé, he observed that he was looking pensive: "What is the matter," he said to him, "I see that you are uneasy." "It is because I am a bishop," replied Alphonso. "I hear that there is a wretched person whom I sent out of the diocese on account of her disorderly life, and now she is endeavouring to re-enter it." The news of this attempt tormented him so much, that he, without regard for his health, hastened

his return to St. Agatha to cause this scandal to disappear. He had already been nearly a month at Nocera, Bishop Volpé begged him to remain a few days longer. "My dear bishop," Alphonso said to him, "God wills that I should be at St. Agatha and not at Nocera;" and as the prelate insisted on it, "I cannot, I cannot," Alphonso repeated with agitation, "I cannot do it, for I have overwhelming scruples already." Our prayers and those of his friends were unable to retain him, and he immediately set out for St. Agatha. As he had suffered a great deal during the preceding winter from coughs and affections of the chest, the doctors advised him to retire to Arienzo, as it had a better climate: he yielded, but the inhabitants of St. Agatha were distressed at this withdrawal, which afflicted him the more as the physicians wished him to remain there for a long time. "They are much dissatisfied here," he wrote to Father Villani, on the 25th of June, 1765, "that I must pass the coming winter at Arienzo; it is a great cause of regret to me also, for I have the cathedral and chapter at St. Agatha, and, what is of more consequence, the seminary; but on the other hand, I have been ill for the last two winters; for this reason I have been advised to pass this one at Arienzo, in a house of St. Mary de Vico, where the air is not so damp as it is here. My greatest disquietude is in quitting St. Agatha for such a long time; the evils which afflict that town will perhaps become still greater through my absence. I wish to have your opinion, to

take away my fears." Father Villani, as well as Bishop Borgia, Bishop Volpé, and others whom he had consulted, wished him to banish every scruple and go to Arienzo.

When his health was re-established, he recommenced his visitation. Father Villani forbade him to make use of his straw-bed during the visitation, in consideration of his great infirmities, his age, and the numerous maladies which had exhausted his strength, and wished him to use whatever bed Providence might send him wherever he went. Alphonso obeyed, but this submission cost him a great deal when he had no fever, for then he thought that he enjoyed too good health. He wrote to Father Villani from St. Agatha on the 25th of September: "By the mercy of God I am entirely recovered, and I go to Arienzo on Sunday." He was scarcely recovered, (this must be understood with reference to his infirmities,) when he recommenced his penances and macerations; the delicacy of his conscience would not allow him to do so without the sanction of his director, so he wrote to Father Villani on the 28th of October, saying, "I have not slept on straw again, but the milk diet has quite restored me, and so if you will permit it, I wish to resume the straw-bed. It has been necessary to apply another blister, for the first has dried up. I have begun to wear the chains on the part where the old one has been taken away. I beg for your blessing." He also said in another letter, "I have only taken boiled meat at dinner till now, leaving the first dish

untouched; but as I am obliged only to eat once a day, I have consulted Father Majone, and he has told me to take a second dish. In case the boiled meat is sufficient, and that the meat is tender, (for it is often tough,) and I cannot eat much bread, as it is bad for me, I wish to ask your Reverence, as my principal director, to allow me to eat the bouilli only. If you do not approve of my request, I will submit to your decision."

CHAPTER XXV.

Alphonso's mind was agitated by painful anxieties at this time. Every day he heard of the great number of evil books which spread their contagious influence in the transalpine countries, and particularly in France, to the great injury of religion and of the state; these disorders left him no repose. He especially deplored the clandestine introduction of these books into Italy by the librarians of Naples, who spread them through the provinces; he was principally alarmed at the poisonous writings of Voltaire and J. J. Rousseau, who were both sworn enemies of the Church and state. He was constantly protesting against them to the court, from his anxiety to see this evil remedied, and he entreated the Marquesses of Marco and Panucci to forbid the importation and the sale of these works. He enforced on confessors and preachers the duty of inspiring a

horror of such reading, and he especially commanded this to be done by our missionaries and by those who went through the provinces. Samuel Basnage's abominable book made him very uneasy, and he grieved over the great mischief it caused to ill-instructed Catholics. He would have liked to enter the lists against this dangerous writer, and there is no doubt that he would have discomfited him, but his great age and the weight of the episcopacy left him neither strength nor time for it. He manifested to Father de Reo of our congregation, his desire to see him labour to refute at least his errors as to matters of religion. "I have a work on hand," he wrote to him, "from which I have made many interesting extracts against the Jansenists; I should like to see you also take up arms against these pestilential people; above all, I beg you not to lose sight of the unhappy Basnage. What you would write on this subject would be read by the whole Church."* Cardinal Spinelli had induced the same father to support an academy which he had established to combat the errors of Basnage.

Our Saint was especially grieved at seeing books which affected the purity of the Gospel put forth by false Catholics. "There is nothing," said he, "which is so pernicious to souls and to the

* Father Don Alexander would have satisfied Alphonso's wishes, if he had not been engaged with his grand work, the Annals of the Kingdom, at the time. We have a very learned refutation of Anthony Arnauld by this father, however, on frequent communion; he composed it in defence of our Saint against Aristasio.

Church as error concealed under the mask of a specious evangelical perfection." He alluded to the Jansenists in particular. He said, "These are more dangerous enemies than Luther and Calvin, because they are hidden, and one does not avoid them.—Be on your guard," he repeated, "against Anthony Arnauld, who makes a show of sanctity, and appears only to seek for purity and perfection in order to be able to approach communion aright, while he has no other intention than to keep the faithful away from this sacrament, which is the only support of our weakness."

He was again attacked in the controversies of the day, on account of his moral theology; Father Sapio of the Oratory, wrote to him that Fathers Patuzzi and Gonzales were armed against him. "Let them do as they please," replied Alphonso on the 7th of January, 1766, "I did not write to gain honour, but only to make known the truth. If what I have written is convincing, it is well; if it is otherwise, I do not wish to be victorious by obstinacy, as Father Patuzzi has accused me of doing. I regret that the learned have a prejudice that he who does not write to defend tutiorism, so in fashion in our days, is not well informed. The ultramontane party has spread in many Catholic countries; it triumphs, and souls go to their ruin. Let us pray God to put a stop to this. A book has been published, entitled, The Realization of the Project of Bourg-Fontaine, which shows the Jansenists' intention of overthrowing the Church; this book is important, because it proves every-

thing by authentic passages, your Reverence must procure and read it; I repeat that this is a book of great importance, the Jesuit fathers will be able to reap great advantage from it."

He was also transported with indignation against the sect of the Freemasons. "This sect," said he, with tears in his eyes, "will cause evil, not only to the Church, but also to kingdoms and sovereigns. Kings do not attend to them, but they will recognise their fatal negligence when too late. Freemasons act against God at present, and they will soon attack kings." Besides addressing a great number of letters on this subject to the members of the regency established at Naples, after King Charles III. had quitted this town, he also wrote to Cardinal Sersale to get him to use all his influence, in order to free Naples and the provinces from this abominable sect.

He composed his great work on the Truth of the Faith at this time against the unbelievers of modern times. He said on this occasion in a letter to Father Sapio, which we mentioned before, "I am engaged in writing a complete work against the modern errors of deists and materialists. I have already finished a great part. Recommend me to God, and pray that He may aid me to write so as to undeceive a number of poor young people who are infected with these errors, principally by the bad books which are continually coming from France, and are introduced here by men of a certain party. We must weep and pray over the poor Church, which is thus

attacked; let us have confidence however, portæ inferi non prævalebunt. I am going to publish another book on all the heresies; it seems to me to be tolerably good, but as it is a tedious labour, I do not know if I shall ever be able to finish it."

It caused him the greatest sorrow to see the infallibility of the Pope attacked and questioned. As he perceived that the greatest argument which was made use of at that time against this dogma, was drawn from the declaration of the Assembly of Paris in 1682, he undertook to refute it ex professo, in a treatise which he published under the title of "Reflections on the Declaration of the Assembly of France, on the subject of the infallibility of the Sovereign Pontiff." He proved the Pope's infallibility therein, as a matter of faith, by the authority of the holy fathers, and œcumenical councils, and how little value was to be attached to this Declaration, as the assembly had not been a general one, but only consisted of forty-four bishops met together by the command of Louis XIV., who, in retaliation for the Pope's having refused him the revenues of the vacant bishoprics, convoked together this small number of bishops, forbade the doctors of the Sorbonne to make any opposition, and ordered the adhering bishops to teach this same doctrine in their dioceses. He also proved how little authority this same Declaration has, even by the confession of many among the French, who before and afterwards agreed to maintain the infallibility: he added, besides, that forty-

four bishops themselves assured the Pope in a protest, that they had not intended to condemn the contrary opinion. This treatise produced such an effect, that the Gallicans themselves sounded its praises.

Another thing caused him much sorrow, and that was the storm which was raised up throughout Europe against the Jesuits. He wrote to the Father Provincial de Matteis as follows: "I have not received any tidings about the affairs of your society: I feel almost as much uneasiness as if it related to our little congregation. A society is menaced which one may say has sanctified all the world, and which continues unceasingly to sanctify it." As the calumnies went on making most sad progress, and there remained no doubt that this celebrated society would be soon suppressed; the holy bishop felt nearly dead through sorrow. "The Church," said he, "is called the vineyard of Jesus Christ, but if the workmen who have to cultivate and preserve it are taken away, it will only produce thorns and briars, under which serpents will hide themselves to destroy religion and the state. If these labourers are to be no more," he exclaimed in the excess of his sorrow, "We are lost!" He considered a town happy which possessed one of the colleges of the company. "Independently of the great good which they do through missions, the Jesuits," said he, "know how to sow the seeds of piety in the hearts of the young, and to produce plants, which, when transported into all classes of society, sanctify both town and coun-

try. The Jansenists and all innovators would like to annihilate this society, in order to overthrow the bulwark of the Church of God. Against such enemies, where shall we find vigorous champions such as those which the Company of Jesus alone can train up?"

He therefore deplored the blindness of those sovereigns, who, being deceived by the false reports of pretendedly zealous Catholics, declared themselves also against these religious. "Religion and the state," said he, "are mutually connected together; when the one is shaken, the other totters and goes to ruin."

However, Pope Celement XIII. issued a bull, by which he confirmed the institute and the company anew. Alphonso was so full of joy at this, that he felt that he must write to the Sovereign Pontiff to thank him. The following is his letter, dated from Castel Gondolfo, on the 19th of June, 1765.

"Most holy Father,

"The bull which your Holiness has issued in praise of the venerable Society of Jesus, and for its confirmation, has filled all good people with a joy, in which I, although so unworthy, feel an honour in specially participating. I have the deepest and greatest esteem for the company, on account of the great good which these holy religious effect by their example and continual labours, in every place where they may be, in the schools, churches, and oratories of the numerous congregations which they direct, as well as through confessions and preachings, the spi-

ritual exercises which they give, and by the fatigue which they undergo in order to sanctify even prisons and galleys, I can render testimony to their zeal myself, which I used to admire when I lived at Naples. The Lord has willed that they should be tried by divers contradictions and obstacles lately; but your Holiness, who is the head of the Church, and the common father of the faithful, has comforted them, and us also who are your children, by solemnly publishing everywhere the praises and merits of the company. You have thus closed the mouths of the ill-disposed, who have sought to blacken not only the individuals, but also the whole institute. For us, shepherds of souls, who find such great aid in the government of our flocks, from the zeal and labours of these good fathers, we render our most humble thanksgivings to your Holiness, for what you have done, and we most earnestly entreat you ever to protect this holy order—an order which has given to the Church so many worthy labourers, to the faith so many martyrs, and which throughout the whole world has done so much for the salvation of souls, not only in Catholic countries, but also among infidels and heretics; and which, we doubt not, is intended by the Divine Goodness to effect still greater good.* It is with these sentiments that I prostrate myself humbly at the feet of your Holiness, and implore your sacred benediction."

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* "Dominus pauperem facit et ditat, humiliat and sublevat." Reg. i. cap. 2, 7.

The Pope was delighted with this declaration of Alphonso's, and answered him most affectionately,* as follows: "We have read the letter in which you have communicated to us the lively satisfaction which we were already persuaded you would feel at our apostolical constitution in favour of the pious institute of the Company of Jesus. We have also seen with singular pleasure, that you entertain sentiments towards this society, in conformity with the high eulogiums which many other bishops, our venerable brothers, have also expressed in their letters to us. We are extremely glad to see in you a love of justice, a grandeur of soul, and a liberty so worthy of a bishop, which by raising you above all human respect, causes you courageously to make known what you think of the company and its defenders. It is with the greatest affection that whilst embracing you in the bosom of our charity, we give you, venerable brother, our apostolical benediction." In the midst of these painful anxieties Alphonso had at least the satisfaction of seeing his little congregation loaded with the blessings of the

* "Libentissime legimus litteras tuas, ex quibus intelleximus, quod etiam sine litteris arbitramur, constitutionem nostram, qua pium societatis Jesu institutum laudavimus et confirmavimus, fraternitati tuæ jucundissimum accidisse. Gratissimum præterea nobis illud fuit, eadem te de illa societate honorificentissime prædicare, quæ a pluribus aliis Ven. Fratribus episcopis, per litteras nobis datas, singularibus laudibus efferuntur. Cæterum, tuum justitiæ amorem, animi tui magnitudinem, libertatemque episcopo dignam, summopere amamus, Ven. Frater, qui nullo rerum humanarum respectu deterritus, nihil veritus es de memorato instituto, ejusque sectatoribus, per litteras tuas apud nos profiteri, quid sentias;" puis concluant la lettre, "Et fraternitatis tuæ, quam in nostræ charitatis gerimus sinu, apostolicam benedictionem peramanter impertimur."

Lord. He addressed a circular, dated 27th of August, in order to stir up a daily increasing fervour, from his great wish to see it become more and more perfect. He cherished this work as the apple of his eye, and the smallest spot which he observed in it affected him deeply, and always appeared to him considerable. "I perceive with sorrow," said he in the exaggeration of his feelings, "that fervour is much decayed amongst the subjects of the congregation, and I beg each of you to watch over himself attentively for the time to come, because I cannot suffer any relaxation in the rule during my life. I am told that there is little inclination for poverty and mortification. Ah! have we then entered the congregation to enjoy our ease, and to exclaim against pain? It would in that case have been better had we remained in our houses. I also hear that obedience to superiors is lessened; if obedience ceases the congregation will not survive it; if we lose obedience, what will our houses become or be but habitations for disquiet, disputes, and sin? I sent for the Father Vicar-General, Don Andrew Villani, to come here, and I have told him to punish public faults by public mortifications, and to expel such as shall show themselves to be incorrigible. The congregation has no need of many subjects; it only seeks for those who wish to become saints. It is enough for it if ten remain who truly love God. It is being too ungrateful towards God, to repay Him for the love with which He protects the Congregation by failings and neglects. Do we wish

to become like so many others, who cause the Church scandal, rather than edification? I have told Father Don Andrew Villani that his government is too weak and mild, and that I wish to be better informed of all that occurs of an important nature for the future. I beg you all also to let me know of any serious disorders to which Father Villani, after being informed by you, shall not apply a remedy; it will be for me then to supply his inefficiency, and I believe that it is for this end that God spares my life. I advise the young men not to give way themselves to a kind of impatience for preaching; I would rather that they were impatient to please Jesus Christ. Let no one manifest a desire to ascend the pulpit, unless he is ordered to do it. I beg you all, and especially the young, to revise and study what you have to say in public, should it be only an evening exhortation. We preach now what comes first into our minds: why be astonished after that to hear it said that we preach at random? Let none of the young fathers ever fail to have their sermon revised by some older one, who understands the matter, such as Father Cajone, Father Rizzi, and others, and let each one, before preaching or giving an instruction, study and read over what he has to say attentively, in order that all may be said with order and solidity, without studied turns of speech and high-flown language, but in a familiar style, because that is what is fitting for missionaries. Above all, it is necessary to mortify oneself and to please God, otherwise God will not aid us,

and we shall preach in vain. I bless you all, I mean all those who are well intentioned; if there are others, I do not curse them, but God will curse them, and will expel them from the Congregation."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Our saint's infirmities daily increased through old age. Fearing to be no longer fit to fulfil the obligations of his laborious ministry properly, he thought of quitting it for the greater good of his diocese; but he could not disguise from himself that, in spite of his age and sufferings, he was still able to do much good; in this alternative he had recourse to the opinions of several enlightened persons, in order to be sure of the will of God; amongst others he sent me to Naples, to seek for Mgr. Borgia, in order to know what he thought about it as before God. This holy prelate approved of his resolution, but his reasons did not satisfy Alphonso, nor give rest to his conscience.

He wrote to Father Villani, who was then at Naples, on the 14th of January, 1765, saying, "Father Farmoja tells me that Bp. Borgia approves of my resigning my bishopric, but I wish to act in the matter with more certainty as to the will of God, and to see if the thing will conduce to His glory." He also sent him the follow-

ing letter on the same day, in which he expresses himself at greater length:

"I wrote to you just now about the opinion which has been communicated to me on the part of Mgr. Borgia; at present I beg you again to speak before your departure to Don Janvier Fatigati and to the Fathers Alasio, Porcara, and de Matteis. The principal reason for my resignation must not be the desire for retirement, as Mgr. Borgia says, for this cause is rejected in the chapter Nisi de renunc, but it ought to be my advanced age, for I shall enter my seventieth year in September, and besides my usual affection of the chest, I was almost constantly ill during the winter last year; this year I may say that I have been so until now. I have been confined to bed from asthma for upwards of a month. It is true however, (for I must tell all to prevent scruples,) that I continue to attend to business, and that everything is done as usual; but as long as winter lasts I am unable to go about on visitation or to assist in the choir. In summer time, as I am then free from my malady of the chest, I go throughout my diocese during three or four months. I feel forced to ask for my dismissal, for I have a host of scruples at seeing the dissatisfaction which arises from scandals, of which I am a witness and which I ought not to tolerate. I tremble most from the fear that I have sought for my own ease in this resignation, and not God's glory: this is why I wish to be sure as to what will really conduce to the glory of God."

The opinion of Father Porcara and that of

Father Alasio were in conformity with that of Mgr. Borgia, but Alphonso, far from being freed from his anxiety thereby, became more embarrassed. "I received your note," he wrote to Father Villani on the 1st of February, "and I see there the answers which you have got from Fathers Alasio and Porcara; but, my dear Andrew, I wish much to have a conscience at rest. The difficulties in which I find myself on account of so many very delicate matters in which I am involved without cessation, urge me to wish for a little rest, it is true, but I would not have my cell become a hell to me, in order to free myself from a burthen, contrary to God's will. I am certain that God has willed me to be a bishop during the last three years, and now I ought to be as certain that He no longer wishes me to be bishop. I am sorry to be unable to converse with you by word of mouth, for these things are not well explained otherwise. Nevertheless, since your Reverence is at Naples, I must communicate to you all that I think of this matter, as you will be able to give me a wiser and better-grounded opinion after having examined my reasons. Notice, in the first place, that according to St. Thomas, a bishop is bound by vow not to abandon his Church, and that the Pope, in the chapter Nisi de renunc, forbids him to quit it without a just cause. He expressly declares that neither the troubles of many labours nor the desire for solitude can be regarded as a sufficient cause. Mgr. Borgia said that the most adequate motives for me would be my old age and bad health.

'But it must be observed,' as the Pope says, 'that infirmity and great age only form a legitimate excuse when they render us incapable of fulfilling our charge;' this is what he has stated in the third section of the chapter cited above: 'Alia vero causa est debilitas corporis ex infirmitate vel, senectute; nec tamen omnis, sed illa solummodo per quam impotens redditur ad exsequendum officium pastorale.' He then adds: 'Cum interdum non plus hortetur servilis debilitas aliquem cedere, quam moralis maturitas quæ in senibus esse solet, ipsum in suo suadet officio permanere.' That being laid down, let us come to ourselves. You must put everything before those persons to whom you have already spoken, or to whom you may still apply to ask for advice. It would be well for you not to forget to speak to Father Chiesa for that purpose. It is true that I am old, since I shall complete my sixty-ninth year next September; it is also true that I have bad health, especially on account of the coughs which affect me in winter; but notwithstanding all that, it seems to me that nothing prevents my fulfilling the duties of my office, as to the examination of confessors and candidates for holy orders, and that as much with reference to knowledge as to good conduct, for I still do more than many others, even as regards knowledge. As for scandals, I never cease to pursue them to the end, and without any compromise. As to patents, I never confer them from preference, or on any but to those who have most merit, even when only simple

benefices are concerned; this has made me more enemies than friends. It is true that I cannot go out in winter nor go on visitation; I employ that time in examinations and private correspondences, for my head is more at liberty then. I cannot write much, but I have recourse to the pen of Brother Francis Anthony, whose discretion leaves me at rest. After that four or five months remain to me, which I devote entirely to the visitation of my diocese.

"It is necessary to enter into all these details, and to cause them to be understood by those whose counsel you ask, otherwise I should not resign my bishopric with a peaceful soul, and I feel that my conscience would torment me in my retreat at Nocera; so I always pray that our blessed Lord will make me know His will clearly. Things being as I have just told you, it seems to me that I cannot ask for my resignation without scruple, on the plea of not being able to fulfil my duties through old age and ill health. Therein lies my uneasiness, as I told Father Ferrara yesterday, who came to see me, and whom I caused to read the very words of the Sovereign Pontiff. I send this letter to you by the courier, in order that you may be able to take the advice of the good fathers whom you may consult before you leave Naples, and without hurrying anything; for I repeat, that I shall not be at peace if you do not communicate to them all which I have written to you. To sum up all in conclusion, I wish that my conscience should be freed from a load of disquietudes; I meet with many things

to disgust me, but I hear it said to me, 'Si diligis me, pasce oves meas,' and it matters little whether I die or succumb. The uncertainty I am in, not knowing if I am doing the will of God or not in asking for my resignation, is a greater anxiety to me than all the rest."

After having taken all these opinions, he resolved at last to represent his age and infirmities to the Pope in a simple manner, to propose his resignation to him, and to leave the decision with his Holiness. The following is his petition on this subject:

"Most holy Father,

"As Almighty God again visited me with a serious illness in the month of August, in which I was obliged to receive Extreme Unction, I once more prostrate myself at the feet of your Holiness to ask you to accept of my resignation of the bishopric of St. Agatha de Goti. I am now sixty-nine years of age, and during winter I am obliged to be shut up on account of the affection of my chest; for this reason I wish to retire amongst my congregation in order to prepare for death, which cannot now be far distant from me, and as it is impossible for me to continue myself the little good the Lord has deigned to do in this diocese by means of His unworthy servant, I beseech your Holiness to confide this Church to Mgr. Puoti, Archbishop of Amalfi, where his health is by no means strong; I wish for this above all, because he is a prelate of great zeal and energy. It appears to me that Heaven

inspired me with the thought of addressing this request to your Holiness during my last illness, in order that the last act of my life as a bishop should be one for the good of my diocese. However, if your Holiness has thought of another subject, I still offer my resignation; and if you deign to accept it, I will place it simply and freely in your hands. If you, on the contrary, notwithstanding my age and infirmities, think me still fit to govern this church, I wish to die under the yoke, in order to fulfil God's will. I await the decision of your Holiness, and humbly prostrate myself at your feet."

Alphonso impatiently waited for the result of his application, but his heart foretold to him that it would not be heard. "I have received no answer from Rome," he wrote to Father Villani on the 26th of June. "But I believe I shall have difficulty in obtaining the favour I have asked, for I have heard that they would not accept the resignation of the Bishop of Settere, who is however fit to be buried. May God do whatever is for His greatest glory."

The Pope was entirely opposed to the holy bishop's wishes, and Cardinal Negroni answered him in these terms in his letter of 18th of June, 1765: "I read the letter which your Lordship addressed to his Holiness to him from beginning to end, without omitting anything, and in which you represent your great age and the decay of your health, which becomes still weaker every year, as well as the infirmities which incommode

you, especially during winter, which make you fear that the good administration of your diocese may suffer some injury, resigning yourself however to the judgment of the holy Father, if he thinks fit to accept your resignation, but declaring yourself ready to accomplish the will of God as manifested by His Vicar. This delicacy and this resignation have singularly confirmed his Holiness in the perfect assurance he already had in your virtue when he called you three years ago to the head of this diocese by a formal command. The holy Father thanks God for the great good which you have effected by His aid until now, and he is persuaded that you can continue this good by your authority, your direction, and your example, even should your malady become still more serious, and should your physcial strength become still weaker ; from which, however, I hope God will spare us.

"His Holiness charges me then to reply to you, and to encourage you in his name to cast aside every scruple on this subject, to be in perfect tranquillity of mind, and to continue to persevere in your vocation, which is most certain, labouring for the good of the souls which are entrusted to you, and for the glory of God, who will assuredly grant you all needful succour. It is with these sentiments that his Holiness implores the divine blessing on you, and paternally gives you his apostolical benediction ; I beg you to receive the assurance of my particular esteem, and I kiss your hand in all sincerity."

On the request of the saintly old man, Car-

dinals Spinelli and Rossi, and Mgr. de Simone, who was auditor, had supported his request to the Pope. "His shadow alone would suffice to govern the whole diocese," was the Sovereign Pontiff's answer to him. Alphonso had also employed Bishop Pallavicino, the nuncio at Naples, as a mediator; but the Pope replied to him also, that he positively wished that Alphonso should continue to bear the weight of his charge. "The same will of God which caused you to be a bishop," said the nuncio to him, "will know how to aid you in ruling over your Church." When Mgr. Borgia saw that things took this turn, he reassured our saint, and said to him, "Do not be distressed, for it is the will of God." Alphonso did become tranquil, and was content, even if he had to die under the burthen. In the midst of all these tribulations quite a mysterious circumstance happened to him. From the 1st of June, 1765, he, as well as those who were near him, heard a great number of little blows issue from the cross he wore at his neck every time he said the rosary. They examined to see if there were not some insect there; they also made other searches, but they could discover nothing. But as soon as he had received the negative answer of the Pope, the little blows were heard no more. His Lordship concluded that there had been a mystery therein, and that God had wished him to understand that he ought to continue to bear the cross with which he had been entrusted.

CHAPTER XXVII.

One of the principal establishments which Alphonso made at St. Agatha was without doubt the convent of the nuns of the Most Holy Redeemer. As this distinguished town contained no convent wherein young ladies of high family could receive their education, or consecrate themselves to God, families were obliged to send their children elsewhere, which entailed much inconvenience and a double expense. The absence of such an institution was regretted, but no one had yet been able to supply it; Alphonso took the work in hand, and succeeded gloriously. "The establishment of the religious of the Most Holy Redeemer," Archdeacon Francis Rainone wrote to me, "is a work without doubt most worthy to promote the glory of God, most honourable to his Lordship, and most useful for this town. The Lord has reserved to our saintly prelate to make this foundation; his zeal, his constancy, and his great solicitude were necessary to put it in execution."

This work had been attempted two centuries before, but all the plans remained imperfect. The Lords of Mazzi, noble and ancient patricians of St. Agatha, had begun to erect a church in the year 1610, in honour of the Blessed Virgin, under the title of St. Mary of Constantinople; but as this family had become extinct, the church

remained unfinished, and it ended in being called the church of St. Nobody, that is to say, that no saint was honoured there. The head of the chapter, Don Thomas Talia, had erected an altar in this church in honour of the Blessed Virgin, during the episcopate of Mgr. Danza, who was raised to this see in the year 1618, and he had established a confraternity there, consisting of a hundred and fifty brothers, who were the edification of the whole town. They practised many pious exercises, and took the discipline in common on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays; in short, through the pains taken by Don Thomas, this confraternity was aggregated to that of St. Francis of Assisi at Rome; but after the death of this worthy canon, the members became relaxed, and the society dissolved itself in the course of a few years.

The Blessed Virgin did not fail to give proofs of her protection to this place, which was thus dedicated to her. The inhabitants of St. Agatha, on seeing it abandoned, wished to erect a house of Franciscan nuns there, instead of a confraternity of men, and some pious women established themselves on the 10th of October, 1630, in two small rooms annexed to the church. The buildings being increased, the religious continued to live there during fifty-two years, to the great advantage of many young ladies, who received their education there; but discord penetrated into this holy spot in 1702, and it was again abandoned.

Under Mgr. Albini, who was elected bishop

at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Duke of Costo entertained the idea of establishing a convent of cloistered nuns there, and he augmented the revenues of the house. The work was nearly finished, when the death of the duke and of the bishop again stopped it, and to make the matter still worse, the sanctuary of virgins became the resort of women of bad character. The church was shut up and deprived of revenue, and the house was destined to lodge the soldiers who might come to St. Agatha.

Alphonso had cast his eyes on this edifice from the first beginning of his episcopate, with the intention of changing this resort of wild beasts into a nest for doves. When his project became known, he was immediately assailed by a torrent of objections; some wished for one thing, others for another; a great number applauded this undertaking, which they judged to be advantageous to the public good, and several opposed it on account of certain interests. Some, in short, wished that a simple asylum should be established there, but not a cloistered monastery; the most part wanted to have inclosure however, but they were not agreed as to the manner of regulating it. "Explain your meaning," said Alphonso to them; "if you intend to found a convent of servants of God, I will hasten to co-operate in it, but if you intend to form a mere assemblage of women, it would be better to say no more about it. The matter was at length put into his hands, and he decided to establish the religious of the

Most Holy Redeemer of Scala there, in preference to any others. But one obstacle still remained, there was not sufficient revenue. The holy prelate fortified himself by trust in God, and managed so well that he obtained an annual subsidy of ninety-seven ducats from the Pope on the ecclesiastical chapels, and a rent of twenty-five ducats from the King of Naples on the lay chapels. The town also granted him fifty ducats annually for ten years, with the approbation of the chamber, which being added to the four hundred and twenty-two ducats which the Church already possessed, formed an income of six hundred and ninety-four ducats, which together with the portions, was sufficient for the establishment of the convent.

The inhabitants of St. Agatha, astonished at the success of their bishop's undertaking, gave him all that he wished. He caused the buildings to be repaired; he went to the spot nearly every day to encourage and hasten the workmen. "Who knows how much longer I may have to live," said he. He would have liked to see every thing done by enchantment. He arranged that the religious from the convent of Scala should come there as foundresses, and the Pope permitted him to instal them in the new cloister in the month of July, 1765.

Our saint was greatly aided in this undertaking by Don Francis Andrew Mastillo, the agent of the Duke of Maddalon. After his Lordship had obtained the approbation of the Sovereign Pontiff

and the consent of the king of Naples, he wrote to him, "We shall begin to set the convent on foot immediately; as to the subsidy from the chapels, which is wanting in consequence of the famine, the sums paid by the pensioners will be enough to supply for that during the first two or three years; I will furnish a hundred ducats annually during that time, for my share, in order to see this excellent work advance rapidly. I hope that this institution will sanctify our dear town of St. Agatha. The erection of this convent ought to change its appearance, for I plainly see that no human power can succeed in this, and I am certain that if this work is not completed in my time, it will never take effect; they would raise a convent, but the result would be a house of mere inclosed women. If the convent can be established under the rule of the Most Holy Redeemer, it will become a precious stone, by the edification which these religious will give to the diocese and to the whole province; and parents will see their children more content with these religious than they could be with the nuns of St. Clare, or of Dona Regina at Naples, where the pension is from two to three hundred ducats. I hope you will inform all people who would like to place their daughters there, so that the opening may soon take place; it is not necessary that everything should be perfectly finished yet; all foundations have been in want of something in their commencement. I am going to write to the religious, to hold themselves in readiness."

Sister Mary Raphael of Charity, whose sanctity was well known, was chosen to preside over the beginning of this house of the Most Holy Redeemer. Sister Mary Felicie of the Holy Nails, and sister Mary Celestine of Divine Love, were given to her as assistants, together with a lay-sister, named Mary Josephine of Jesus-Mary; all four were extremely virtuous. They arrived at Nocera on the evening of the 27th of June, 1766, and they reached St. Agatha next day, accompanied by two ladies of that town, Donna Emily Vinaccia, and Jane Rainone, who went to fetch them at Nocera: Don Nicholas Roberti, and Don Lucas Albanese were also with them; the one was treasurer and the other canon of the cathedral, and to these were added our fathers Andrew Villani and Jerome Ferrara.

They passed the night at Nola, in a house called the Temple, where they were congratulated by Mgr. Caracciolo, and visited by several noble ladies. Mother Raphael had the happiness of receiving recruits on the road. Two daughters belonging to the family of Speltri de Vitulano, the one afterwards called Mary Louisa of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the other Mary Theresa of Jesus, who were pensioners in the house of the Temple, were so taken by the high virtues of the Reverend Mother Raphael, that they resolved to follow her.

Alphonso, filled with joy at the arrival of the religious at St. Agatha, persuaded the people to adorn the gates of the town with magnificence, and to ornament the streets with wreaths of

myrtle, rosemary, and boughs of trees, to greet them. Their entry took place on the 29th of June, 1766, at about three o'clock in the afternoon; it was on a Sunday, and an immense crowd hastened to meet them. Alphonso, in his pontifical vestments, advanced to meet them at the head of his chapter and of all the clergy at the cathedral door; while the firing of cannon and ringing of bells testified the joy of the inhabitants. After having visited the Blessed Sacrament, the religious went in procession to the new convent, preceded by the conventual fathers, the seminarists, the clergy, and chapter, after whom went the bishop, followed by all the nobles. On their arrival at the new church, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed and the Te Deum solemnly chanted, during which the foundresses took possession of the convent. The ladies of the town had the power of visiting them and of enjoying their conversation until the Wednesday, but on that day, which was the feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, the grand-vicar went to establish the inclosure with the usual ceremonies in the bishop's name.

Alphonso took care to provide everything which could be wanted for the convent. There were corn, wine, cooking utensils, table linen, and necessary furniture; nothing was missing. He sent eatables all ready prepared to the new comers for the first eight days. He wished to continue it for a month, but the religious dispensed him from it, wishing to live in the poverty prescribed by their rule.

When the new foundation made under the auspices of Bishop Liguori became known in the province, the great regularity which existed there, and, above all, the holiness of its foundresses, the convent was soon filled with pupils who came from St. Agatha, Arienzo, and Naples.

The third Sunday in July was fixed for celebrating the feast of the Most Holy Redeemer. His Lordship caused the Blessed Sacrament to be exposed all day on the vigil before, and preached himself in the evening. The feast was solemnized with music and extraordinary pomp.

As four pupils determined to take the novices' habit his Lordship gave them the exercises of the retreat. He was cheered at seeing their anxiety to consecrate themselves to Jesus Christ; but his joy was not allowed to be free from all bitterness. The young Lucretia Vinaccia was so tormented by melancholy during the retreat, that, full of regrets, she unceasingly wept and sighed for her father's house. One evening after the meditation, Alphonso called her to the grate, encouraged her, and succeeded in restoring her serenity; he then gave her a crucifix to kiss, and made her promise to take Jesus for her Spouse; the young lady immediately experienced a complete change; she returned gaily to the noviciate, and from that time was freed from her thoughts of regret.

He did not exercise the same compassion towards another pupil: "We must distinguish," said he, "between temptation and obstinacy." The one of whom we speak repented of the step

she had taken, and lived in a manner little edifying, thus doing harm to herself as well as to others; though she was Archdeacon Rainone's niece Alphonso silenced all human respect, and sent her back to her parents.

The two young pupils from Nola were the objects of his peculiar kindness. The young ladies' two brothers were dissatisfied with the part they had taken, and for several years refused to pay their pension. His Lordship, aware of the distress they felt, paid it for them, and amongst other things supplied thirty measures of corn to the convent: the brothers gave up their opposition in the end, and they received their portion and made their profession.

Alphonso considered this convent as his own work, and continued to assist it as far as possible, although he was himself in great poverty. He gave fifty measures of corn to it yearly, and also a great quantity of oil. He even went so far as to promise that he would maintain the four foundresses as long as he lived. He very often made them a present of from ten to thirty ducats. He sent them their allowance weekly whilst he lived at St. Agatha, and he let them have it at least monthly, even when he resided at Arienzo. He sent them various little treats on feast days; and when he received any present from his relations in religion, or from others, he bestowed the greatest part on the pensioners and novices.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE most formidable responsibility of the episcopacy to our saint, was the imposition of hands. He required learning and virtue from the young Levites. He said to the examiners at the opening of the examinations, "Let knowledge be your business; I will occupy myself about conduct;" but in reality he did all himself. In one of the regulations that he made for the good administration of his diocese, he determined on the points on which the young clerics ought to be examined.

Those who received the tonsure were obliged to give an account of Christian doctrine, and to specify the different parts of meditation which are necessary to reap fruit from it. Those in minor orders had to know the matter and form of orders, all that appertains to the sacraments, that is to say, their matter, form, reception, and administration; they were also obliged to know the Latin grammar. He admitted no one to the sub-diaconate who did not know the treatises on oaths, vows, canonical hours, and censures, as well as on what belongs to orders. He required the treatises on conscience, laws, human acts, and sins, from the deacons. He wished them to give an account of the theological virtues of charity towards our neighbour, and of religion and its opposite vices, such as superstition, sacrilege,

tempting God, and simony. Those who were raised to the priesthood had to repeat besides the things which relate to this holy order, that which they had already known, and to explain the treatises on the Eucharist, the Sacrifice of the Mass, Penance, Extreme Unction, and Marriage, with all that belongs to the commandments of God and holy Church. After having taken these measures, his Lordship anticipated an objection which might have been made on his seeming to demand greater knowledge than is required by the Council of Trent, and he showed that this Council, in speaking of the priesthood, wishes that its candidates "ad docendum populum et ad administranda sacramenta diligenti examine, idonei comprobentur."* He also claimed the support of the bull of Innocent III.† and the authority of another of Pope Benedict XIV., where it is said that "Episcopos in Domino hortamur ut, quantum fieri potest, eos tantum ad sacerdotium assumant qui saltem theologicæ moralis competenter periti sunt." There were cases, however, when Alphonso showed his justice by paying less attention to the candidate for orders than to the village from which it was a wonder to see a priest proceed. He presided over the examinations in person, and caused all the examiners to assist there also. He wished the other candidates to be present, both to instruct them, and also to show them that there was no partiality, for he always

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* Sep. 23. Cap. 14, de Reform. † Apostolici ministerii.

acted as a father rather than as a superior. He wished those who were but simple clerics to be seated when questioned; he spoke to them with so much kindness that, far from disconcerting them, his presence inspired them with courage. He very often liked to question them himself, and he did it so clearly that the demand suggested the answer. When he reprimanded, he always did it in a way to encourage the subject to study, and promised that he would not delay in comforting him. Dean Daddio told him that he ought at least to make them stand during the interrogatories. Alphonso replied, "I am a father, let us not forget what it is to be examined."

A deacon who had been sent away several times presented himself at the examination again, but in spite of the efforts made by one of the examiners to cause him to pass, he could not succeed. "My son," said Alphonso to him, "I can do nothing more in this; study well and with application, and I will ordain you bye-and-bye; Don Cæsar," (that was the examiner's name,) "whispered the answers to you; what would you have me do?" This clerk was the nephew of a priest whom his Lordship esteemed greatly. He came to see Alphonso, and without saying anything to him, let him see, however, how much he was distressed. "Forgive me," said his Lordship, "for I am myself distressed about your nephew; forgive me, for the love of God, for conscience does not reproach me at all. Ask Canon Michella about the charity with which we treated him."

A young man of excellent conduct, and a good student, was attacked by a pain in the chest, which prevented his attending the course on the treatise de Censuris. When he presented himself for examination for the priesthood, he was found wanting. "The rules are made to be observed," said Alphonso to him, "not merely to be posted up in the sacristy." But when the parish priest, Don Pascal Bartolini, whose pupil the young man had been, assured him that he was well acquainted with the other matters of examination, his Lordship listened to him, and finding that he really was very well instructed in all besides, he made no further difficulty in admitting him.

Of all the orders, the sub-diaconate was the one which caused most embarrassment to the young men as well as to his Lordship. "If I ordain A," said Alphonso, "I must necessarily ordain B." One priest has affirmed that he was kept sitting during five hours at an examination for the sub-diaconate. In fact, Alphonso made him give an exact account of all the treatises, that is to say, of those on human acts, conscience, laws, sins, vows and oaths, and on restitution. He confessed that he was not received without difficulty, and that the trial lasted until seven o'clock in the evening, so that the grand-vicar was unable to continue any longer through fatigue. The bishop never left the examination to his grand-vicar, or to any other person. The seminarists themselves, who had already given proofs of their capacity, in examinations undergone in the seminary in his presence, were still

obliged to go through the usual examination before entering into holy orders. Father Dominic Caputo, the director of the seminary, and others, have assured me that those who seemed to have no need of being examined were so, and with the most rigour, and that in the same measure in which Alphonso was comforted by praising the talent of those who distinguished themselves, did he also feel humbled in the presence of those who gave proofs of idleness. He advised the examiners to proceed with most severity towards those clerics who had been brought up at the seminary. If one of these latter were found wanting, and wished to trust to the indulgence of the examiners, imagining that his attending the course of lectures would supply the place of the rest, his Lordship immediately overthrew his hopes. "I wish," said he, "the thing done, and not the thing to be done, and for this reason I know of no future tense in my grammar, I only know of the past tense."

Alexander Lettieri, who was a young man endowed with the most happy dispositions, had finished his course of study at Naples in Bishop Danza's time, and had maintained a dogmatical thesis in the Church of St. Catharine of Formello; when he presented himself to receive the priesthood, he thought that by repeating the arguments of his thesis he would be exempted from all further trial. "At Naples," said Alphonso to him, "all who heard you were spectators, but here, in order to be ordained you must be examined." From the time of his arrival in the diocese

he declared by an edict that no one was to aspire to orders or to benefices, and that to manifest such a disposition would be sufficient cause to be excluded from it and declared unworthy. The real qualities of the candidate and the testimony of respectable persons were the only claims which succeeded; if these were wanting, the case was desperate. There was a deacon at Airola who was not wanting in knowledge, but, as he could not satisfy his Lordship in regard to conduct, he was rejected notwithstanding all the efforts of his supporters. He then adopted the clerical habit, frequented the congregation of the missionaries established at Airola, often approached the sacraments, and only conversed with respectable persons; three years having passed thus, and several excellent priests having spoken in his favour at different times, Alphonso at last admitted him to the priesthood.

Very great sweetness was to be admired in his Lordship, and not a less degree of energy. On his arrival in the diocese, he met with an ignorant beneficed clerk, who wished to receive holy orders; in spite of the entreaties which were made in his favour by distinguished personages, he would not consent to admit him; he dismissed all his supporters with this laconic answer: "I cannot do it in conscience." Don Pascal dell' Acqua was once present at the examination of a candidate of Durazzano, and his protegé. After the bishop and the examiners had put some questions to the candidate, Don Pascal wished to abridge the examination, and

begged his Lordship to stop there. "When you are bishop," Alphonso replied to him, "you will do as you please; but now the thing concerns me, and my conscience must answer for it."

A gentleman tried to make him ordain a subject whom he loved; believing that his Lordship would be satisfied with his testimony, he attempted to persuade him by a thousand plausible reasons, which he enlarged on for an hour; his Lordship listened to him to the end with immoveable patience; at last, when the gentleman had exhausted the matter, and thought he had gained his cause, Alphonso asked him if he had said all. "I think," replied the gentleman, "that I have wearied you long enough." "Well, that may be," answered Alphonso smilingly, "but imagine that you have spoken to a dead man." "What do you mean by that?" replied the gentleman. "A dead person," answered Alphonso, "could not reply to you. Well, no more can I." Alphonso had a serious reason for rejecting the candidate, and therefore endeavoured to extricate himself in this manner.

The Prince de la Riccia also tried to cause him to admit one of his tenants to the subdiaconate, whom he had previously rejected. Alphonso was under the greatest obligations to this prince, who had favoured and aided him extremely. "My most honoured prince," he wrote to him, "I beg you to pardon me for not doing your pleasure, because in conscience I cannot do it. It is a thing which could not be done without injury to my soul, and I am not a bishop in

order to damn myself." The prince, who had been edified by this, replied to him thus: "The letter that your Lordship has written to me in reply to my petition has given me pleasure; I have seen in it a proof of your zeal, which may truly be called apostolical; and while I assure you that your refusal has caused me great edification, I promise not to disquiet the tenderness of your conscience by similar requests again. I beg your Lordship never to forget me in your prayers, and to dispose of me entirely at your service. I am, &c."

The candidates for holy orders who presented themselves with dimissory letters from their bishops were also obliged to give proofs of their learning, in order to be admitted to ordination. A young man having been sent by Mgr. Filomarino, Bishop of Caserte, Alphonso did not admit him without making him undergo an examination. This bishop, in retaliation, caused a clerk whom Alphonso had sent to him when he was ill, to be examined also. It caused dissatisfaction at St. Agatha, but Alphonso was not offended at it: "If he has acted so," said he, "he has done his duty."

The regulars were obliged to pass through the same ordeal, in spite of the dimissory letters of their provincials. In order to make the thing agreeable to them, his Lordship sent for two fathers belonging to their order, and caused them to examine them in his presence; but if there were no monastery of the order in the neighbourhood he examined them himself, assisted by his grand-vicar and a canon.

Once when he was administering holy orders at St. Mary de Vico, at the moment when he was going to officiate pontifically, the master of the ceremonies told him that a young Carmelite had just arrived. "That is very well," said his Lordship, "but he must be examined." He sent for the young religious, and told him that he was going to question him; the young man replied that he had been already examined by his provincial. "I am quite persuaded of that," said his Lordship to him, "but it is I who must impose hands on you, and not the Father Provincial." As the bishop was firm in exacting the examination, the young Carmelite thought he had better not expose himself to it, so he took off his surplice and returned.

Alphonso always refused to ratify the letters dimissory if they did not submit to the examination, and if they did not furnish certificates of good conduct. The Jesuit Father Spinelli, brother of the prince of this name, had noticed a young man of talent at Frascio, the son of an artisan, and he brought him with him to Naples, to make him study in the schools of the society; but when it was suppressed, the young man found himself abandoned. Counsellor Spinelli, moved with compassion, related the young student's case to the king, and obtained a chaplainship for him of seventy-two ducats; he then wrote to Alphonso for the dimissory letters; but they were refused, and each time that the young man advanced in holy orders, he had to submit to a new examination and to furnish

certificates of good conduct. Alphonso desired that the candidates should present their letters at least a month before the ordination, and all at the same time, to have facility in making his secret investigations in case of need.

In order that the parish priests should only give sincere testimonials, he represented the duty of so doing to them very strongly; "As to erudition, I will ascertain that for myself," he said to them, "by the repeated examinations I will make them all go through; but, as to good conduct, I must trust to you." He was not contented with a simple attestation; he wished that it should be affirmed by oath: "Without that," said he, "the certificates are often only letters accorded to human respect." He wished that they should testify on oath that the canditate had not missed assisting at church on any Sunday or day of obligation; that he had assembled the little children and taught them the catechism; that he had confessed and communicated at least every fortnight; that he had heard mass every day and visited the Blessed Sacrament; that he had not been seen without a cassock; that he had never played at cards; and that he had never engaged in any kind of sport. All this preceded the examination.

Alphonso was especially severe towards young men who had studied at Naples. He used every method to be sure of their merits, and never seemed satisfied; he inquired of the master under whom they had studied; he asked if they had been diligent in following the lectures, what

persons they had visited, and if they avoided games and theatres. He wished, above all, to know if they had often received the sacraments, and if they assisted at the congregation of foreign clergy every Sunday. He never decided under a considerable time, and he did not neglect to charge some friends at Naples to furnish him with the most exact information about them. When young Pascal Bartolini, who afterwards became the very excellent parish priest of Airola, presented himself to receive the tonsure and minor orders, Alphonso said to him, "You know that I admit no one into holy orders if he does not frequent my seminary, or if he has not my permission to study elsewhere." Bartolini replied, that he had been at Naples for upwards of nine years, that he had gone through his course of philosophy, and that he was then studying theology. His Lordship, after hearing this preamble, said to him, "I do not mean to refuse you, but come back again in a fortnight." He took the time necessary to make inquiries about him. Bartolini gave him Don Gaetan d'Hieronymo's remembrances on leaving him, as well as those of Don Paul de Majo. His Lordship immediately said, "You know Don Gaetan, then?"—"Yes," replied young Bartolini; "his brother Ignatius is my confessor." Alphonso breathed more freely on hearing this. "Since this is the case," he went on to say, "procure me letters from Don Ignatius." He received the letters, and admitted the young man to receive holy orders without any difficulty. He refused to receive a young novice to minor

orders, though his conduct might be ever so exemplary, because he sometimes conversed with a suspected priest. He had no more pity for another seminarist clerk, who had been several times excluded from orders, as being little studious and little edifying; as he despaired of entering into favour with the prelate, the young man laid down the clerical dress of his own accord, and quitted the seminary. A deacon having walked about during the night, in company with some singers, with whom he had amused himself, Alphonso refused to make him priest; the young man shed tears, and got several persons of distinction to intercede for him, but all was useless. He was obliged to die only a deacon. "My reasons may not seem sufficiently weighty," said his Lordship, "but I cannot allow walking about and diversion during the night." A cleric in minor orders was refused for a number of years, without being able to be made a sub-deacon, because he was fond of wine, although he protested that he had put himself on a regimen of water; nor would his Lordship let him stay any longer in the seminary. The young man went to another, but, in spite of the good testimonials of his new director, Alphonso always remained inflexible about him. In order to be sure of his amendment, he made him return to St. Agatha, and he determined not to ordain him until he was convinced of his constant temperance.

He who did anything to cause a shadow of suspicion as regarded virtue was obliged to re-

nounce all hope of ever being a priest; he was not only excluded from orders, but he was also obliged to give up the clerical habit. One of the three young men whom he had expelled from the seminary re-entered it, however, some years later, and was admitted to the sub-diaconate; but Alphonso perceiving some levity about him still, refused to make him a deacon. The clerk, in confusion and despair, enlisted as a soldier in the Italian Guard. This conduct made his Lordship uneasy; he hated the vice, but not the individual. "This sheep will be lost," said he, "if we do not fly to his rescue." He applied to General Sangro, and redeemed the clerk with his own money, added to that which he begged from the chapels. He reclothed him in the ecclesiastical habit at Naples, kept him for some time in his palace at St. Agatha while he was at Arienzo, and directed Canon Jermieri to supply his food; and then, being anxious to procure him the means of subsistence, he gave him a small stipend, and nominated him sacristan of the cathedral; but there was no further chance of ordination for him.

Alphonso had two misfortunes to deplore in regard to ordinations. On his arrival at St. Agatha, he found a deacon at the seminary whose conduct was disedifying, but he was so distinguished in his studies that he solved the most difficult questions in theology and philosophy. But Alphonso heard that he was addicted to wine; and from that time he determined not to admit him to the priesthood. Some persons of distinc-

tion interfered; "Do not speak to me any more about it," replied Alphonso to them, "otherwise you will cause me the greatest pain." After several years the parish priest and other ecclesiastics of the chapter again endeavoured to speak in his favour. Alphonso resisted for a long time, but at length he could not refuse to yield to the numerous reasons they gave to assure him of the deacon's amendment. "I consent to ordain him priest," said he, "but he will enjoy the dignity but a short time: he will fall back into sin and die miserably." The deacon was made a priest, and Alphonso sent him to give short missions in the country with other ecclesiastics formed by himself; but in a little time after he took to drinking again. Alphonso grieved over this; he sent for him one day and said to him with feeling before his parish priest, "If you do not give up drinking woe will be to you! Wine will be your ruin." The incorrigible man got drunk again a year after this prediction, and fell into a ditch, where he lost his life. Another deacon had been excluded from the priesthood for several years, as he did not appear to possess the requisite dispositions. An ecclesiastic of merit tried to overcome the bishop's repugnance, and represented to him this deacon's regularity in frequenting the sacraments on divers occasions, and his retired and constantly exemplary life. His Lordship was prevailed on, but he had scarcely ordained him before his conduct became a source of continual scandal to the diocese; he was soon thrown into prison, but he broke his

irons and banished himself. Alphonso then reproached the ecclesiastic for his inconsiderate ardour in the affair, who answered that he had only acted thus in consideration of his poverty. "What!" said Alphonso with vehemence, "because he is poor you betray me and you betray Jesus Christ!"

His Lordship required that those who were to be admitted to holy orders, should also present proofs of a suitable fortune. "The priest who has no patrimony," said he, "will be obliged either to dig the earth, or to dishonour his ministry." He would not receive fictitious titles given through kindness. "These are not works of charity," said he, "on the contrary, this is to render evil service; who is there, who if in want could claim property which does not really belong to him?" He wished them to have five hundred ducats free from any burthen. He examined into the property as well as the rental, and if the income of twenty-four ducats was not clear, he rejected the whole. He wished particularly that the family of the candidate should not suffer any loss.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Alphonso was neither too easy nor too cautious in ordaining new clerks; he admitted all in whom he recognised a real vocation. "It is not our business," said he, "to call any one to

this holy state, nor to reject him from it; God is He who calls, and He does it as He pleases." He liked to see young men eager to consecrate themselves to the service of the altar, and if they showed themselves worthy of it, he was happy to receive them. He was particular in observing the degrees of advancement, and only granted a dispensation in case of necessity. The parish priest, Don Pascal Deodatus, asked him for a dispensation for a young man of good conduct and well informed; Alphonso refused it, saying, that he did not see that it was necessary. Don Pascal then replied, that the archpriest himself wished to have the young man as steward, because of his exemplary conduct. "That is very well," answered Alphonso, "but that reason is not sufficient; I see in it the advantage of the archpriest, rather than the Church's wants."

His rule in the distribution of minor orders was, to admit the young men according to their age, their knowledge, and their conduct. When young Donatus Truppi was presented to him for minor orders, who is now the very worthy Dean of St. Agatha, he readily received him, and, without solicitation, ordered his secretary to note him down for the four minor orders; and when he wished to oppose this, in order to multiply the registries, "It is not to be so," replied Alphonso, "I wish to confer all four at once upon him, for this young man deserves still more."

Alphonso did not like to grant dispensations on account of age, as others do without difficulty. "There are some," said he, "whose fer-

vour in regard to their vocation, only arises from cupidity; in others it is from the desire of these *dominantes in clero*, who wished to have prelates in their families." He never consented unless there was a real necessity, and for a subject of most exemplary conduct. He attached great importance to the spiritual exercises, which he regarded as the only means of instructing the young men in their duties, and he did not allow these exercises to be gone through in a religious house of relaxed observance. "If these religious," said he, "have not the spirit of prayer themselves, how can they pretend to give it to others? The exercises will then only consist in being shut up, and in reading in the morning and evening as an amusement." He wished the candidates to go to one of our houses, or to Naples to the fathers of St. Vincent of Paul. He tried however to prevent those belonging to him from going to Naples as much as he could, fearing the danger of temptation for them there; he sent them to St. Angela in preference, which was a solitary house, and very suitable for a retreat. A deacon having begged him to send him to Naples and not to St. Angela, where he pretended they were too severe, "In short," said Alphonso, "you wish to go to recreate yourself." The young clerk replied that he could point out another monastery in the diocese. "Yes," responded his Lordship, "where you can go and amuse yourself." There was no coming to an agreement, and the deacon was obliged to go to St. Angela.

In order to save all disagreement in families, especially among those who were poor, Alphonso wished that those in minor orders should have made the exercises of the retreat at least once, in order that they might thoroughly understand what the ecclesiastical state is, and what are its obligations before the sub-diaconate. He attached so much weight to these exercises, that if he knew of any one who was really poor, he paid his expenses. A clerk of Bucciano endeavoured to allege divers pretexts to exempt himself. "Tell me the truth," asked Alphonso, "why do you wish not to go there?" The clerk replied openly, that his father, being poor, had a difficulty in supplying him with the money necessary for his maintenance; "Go then," said his Lordship to him, and I will provide all that you will require."

On the day of ordination Alphonso was in the habit of assembling the young men together in the chapel beforehand, and of giving them a sermon on the greatness of their state, and their obligation to live in it holily; afterwards during mass he usually gave them a little exhortation, in order to excite them to receive the holy communion with fervour, and he did it with so much unction that it caused the candidates and spectators to shed tears.

The pious bishop, fully convinced of the wants of the diocese, desired to have the new priests not only of good character and well instructed, but also truly disposed to aid souls, and to cause religion to be honoured. "I do not try," said

he to the examiners, "to approve the candidates, simply that they may be able to say mass, for masses will not be wanting, but in order to have useful workmen for the Church and state. I wish that after having ordained them they may be capable of hearing confessions and of serving me in time of need, not only in the parishes, but also in the monasteries, and that they may be capable of serving in the missions and attending to all the wants of my diocese." He usually gave faculties to hear men's confessions together with the priesthood; he himself instructed all the candidates as to the manner of hearing confessions, and gave them methods of conduct to be used towards the habitual the backsliding and occasional sinner. When he noticed any among these young priests of very promising dispositions, he profited by it, and immediately managed to place them as curates. Having found two deacons whom he judged fit to receive the priesthood and to hear confessions, but seeing that they were poor and still too young for it, he obtained a dispensation for them at his own expense.

When he ordained Don Alexander Capobianco priest, he enjoined him to prepare to be a confessor; but as he showed a repugnance to exercise this ministry so soon, his Lordship said to him, "If this is the case, I forbid you to say mass before having come to the examination, and if you say mass, you shall return here no more; you can close your books, and all that you have done at the seminary shall go for nothing." But

this was not said in earnest. He instructed him on the Wednesday after the ordination, and made him a confessor. He ordained a young man as sub-deacon who had studied at Naples; on leaving him, he told him that he must soon make his retreat, because he thought he ought not to delay in making him a priest and confessor. "My Lord," replied the young man, "I have no fancy for being a confessor." "You have no fancy for being a confessor!" responded Alphonso with animation; "then why do you become a priest? If you do not wish to benefit souls, I have no more wish to give you the priesthood." Alphonso wished all to be confessors, but when he discovered some who wished to have the honour, and to exempt themselves from the burthen, he deprived them of their faculties.

Alphonso's conduct in this matter created censors. Mgr. Pazzuoli amongst others could not approve of it, but at that time he was only in minor orders; when he became bishop of St. Agatha, far from holding the same opinions, he followed his saintly predecessor's example. "If one does not bear this yoke from the first," said Alphonso, "one has an aversion to it afterwards; and on the contrary, when one has contracted this obligation, one becomes edifying even by necessity, one makes efforts over oneself, grace comes to one's assistance, and one advances much in the way of perfection."

He gave no one power to celebrate his first mass, if he were not beforehand assured that he knew even the minutest rubrics. "When a

person commences in a bungling manner," said he, "he never gets right again." So the master of the ceremonies did not approve of any subject until he was more than certain of his aptness, especially as Alphonso often made them celebrate in his presence. A newly-ordained priest abstained from saying mass, fearing to expose himself to the trial. Persuaded however that he would find more indulgence from his Lordship than from the master of the ceremonies, he begged him to allow him to say mass in his presence in his chapel; his Lordship consented, and found that he succeeded well.

Alphonso did not allow a first mass to be an occasion of feasting and worldly rejoicing; he even forbade extraordinary repasts to be given then, and strangers to be invited. "Wine has sway at table," said his Lordship, "and when wine has sway, sin is not far off." He wished that the young priest should preserve a state of recollection on this day, in order to merit from God the plenitude of graces so necessary in this sublime state. He called the day that of the solemn marriage of Jesus Christ with the soul; for this reason he wished that the mass celebrated on this day should be in a retired place.

When Don Custode Troisi was ordained priest, his Lordship, who loved him tenderly, made him say his first mass in his chapel, unknown to his parents, who thought that he did not know the rubrics well, and that he had not been able to obtain leave to celebrate, and they were

only undeceived by the indiscretion of a person belonging to the palace.

Don Alexander Capobianco, when newly raised to the priesthood, went to visit his Lordship, to pay his respects to him. Alphonso asked him when he would celebrate his first mass. He answered that it would be on the following Sunday, and that Don Joseph Petrillo would make the panegyric. At the word panegyric, Alphonso remained in astonishment; "If there is a panegyric," he said, "there will be an entertainment. I do not allow you to do it, and if you do it, you will repent of it." But when he knew that none had been invited there but the nearest relations, he said, "I grant it to you, but there must be no strangers there, and, above all, no women."

After he had ordained Don Vincent de Ambrosio of Durazzano, he expressly forbade him to invite company to dinner. The people of the house not caring for the prohibition, several relations and friends assembled there; as soon as his Lordship heard of it, he wrote to a priest in order to get accurate information about it, and as he did not reply to him immediately he wrote a second letter. When he was convinced of what had passed, he reprimanded Don Vincent, and forbade him to celebrate mass for a fortnight; he consented however to reduce this prohibition to ten days, but it was through the intervention of Don Pascal dell' Acqua, his great friend and the superintendant of Durazzano.

When one of us celebrated his first mass in

his family, he would not have any peculiar solemnity. Our father, Pascal Capriola, who was ordained at Avellino, asked Alphonso's leave to celebrate his first mass at the house of his parents, for their consolation. Alphonso replied, that he must not invite any one on this occasion, nor have any feast, but celebrate in secret. He urged the newly-ordained priests to make a good preparation before celebrating mass, and to excite in themselves good dispositions by repeated acts of faith and of charity, so that they might worthily handle so terrible a mystery. He also recommended them not to leave the church without making their thanksgiving. "By the acts which precede," said he, "above all, by those of contrition, the vessel is emptied and purified, and by the acts which follow, it is filled with the gifts of grace."

As he detested all precipitation in mass, so he equally condemned lengthiness, which is always wearisome to the people. "A mass," said he, "which exceeds half an hour, creates weariness and not devotion in those who hear it;" and he was in the habit of adducing St. Philip Neri's example, who prescribed this rule to himself when he celebrated in public.

He tried to cause a pause to be made in the recital of the office, but not an affected stop. "For some minutes, more or less," said Alphonso, "one condemns oneself to years of purgatory." He, above all, would not suffer them to leave it until night, when they would be forced to recite the office hurriedly. "Mass

and office," said he, "will sanctify us if we go through them as we ought; but they will destroy us, or deprive us of very great graces, if we perform them negligently."

Such were, amongst many others, the measures which Bishop Liguori took in order to have well-instructed and edifying priests, who might serve the people and console the Church; but as weeds always sprout up in the midst of good corn, and briers grow in spite of the vigilance of the most able gardener, so his diocese was not free from subjects who afflicted his heart.

CHAPTER XXX.

Bishop Liguori was very careful and prudent in giving an approbation to new confessors; the examination however was not rigorous, but was conducted with a wise degree of slowness; it was sometimes prolonged during several weeks, during which the subject was obliged to return very often, and to undergo new interrogatories each time. His Lordship caused all these questions to be published, and they alone filled twenty-four pages. He commenced by the treatise on conscience, and went through the whole of morals, of which he caused an exact account to be given. When the priest had not, for some reason or other, received the faculty to hear confessions at the same time as the priesthood, and had to ob-

tain it afterwards, he was obliged to pass through a severe examination afresh. If Alphonso saw that the candidate was well acquainted with theology, he approved him; but if he saw that he was weak and hesitating, he put him off to another time. At times several were found to be capable who did not receive their powers, or at least only received them on condition of returning after two or three months.

When the parish priests or others came to ask him to give a priest the faculty to hear confessions, saying that their parish was in want of confessors, he admitted no one to the examination without being informed if he were a man of prayer; if he made his thanksgiving as he ought, after having said mass; if he never failed to visit the Blessed Sacrament every evening; and, above all, if he never visited suspicious or dangerous people. If any suspicion remained on his mind, he was not admitted to the examination. In giving faculties he recommended nothing but evangelical equity, and the absence of too much indulgence as well as of too much severity. "The custom now is," said he, "to be rigid in proportion to one's wish to avoid the suspicion of laxity; but such is not the spirit of Jesus Christ, nor that of His Church. Did Jansenius ever lead a soul to heaven?—Well! the rigorism of our days is a legacy of Jansenism."

Alphonso did not fix on any age when women's confessions might be heard; he regulated this according to the merits and conduct of the priest. "There are old priests," said he, "who, although

decrepid, are unfit for such an office." His Lordship thought that a priest ought to be useful to his fellow-citizens. He laid this obligation before all those whom he ordained, and urged them to devote themselves to preaching, and to the ministry of the sacred tribunal. Those who acquitted themselves faithfully in this, filled him with joy; they were the first whose advancement he procured; but he immediately took away their faculties from those in whom he noticed remissness or negligence; and, further, he was not satisfied with some amendment; it required years of perseverance in order to regain his esteem; there were therefore many there who could never act as confessors during all the time he ruled over the diocese.

He was not less severe towards the regular priests. Indeed, he may be said to have exacted even more from them than from the seculars; for he was convinced that many only wished to be confessors in order to have the title, and did not seriously apply themselves to the study of moral theology; so that when a regular presented himself to obtain the faculties for confessing, the testimonies of the provincial, and letters certifying that he had been a confessor in other dioceses, did not in the least exempt him from the examination. A religious who was a Dominican, and who was nominated Prior of St. Mary de Vico, came to his Lordship with a letter of recommendation that Don Hercules had given him at the solicitation of others. His Lordship received him with great civility, and was very

kind towards him; but when the Father Rector asked him for the faculties to hear confessions, he answered that he must be examined. "I am ready," added he, "to show you kindness, by rendering you all possible service; but as for the examination, I cannot in conscience dispense you from it." The prior was unwilling to submit to the test; his Lordship was still more so to grant him the powers demanded, and the result was, that the prior ended his life without ever having been a confessor in his church. Another came to see Alphonso one day, putting on an air of importance and a tone of superiority. His Lordship said to his grand-vicar with a smile, "As he is a master, he must be well examined." After having given him a most civil reception, he said to him, "Do not take it ill, but I must examine you, because it is an established rule." The religious submitted to the trial, and did not know how to answer anything. The bishop, without saying that he could not approve him, went out, telling him to wait some time longer, and that he intended to examine him before his prior.

He had a singular visit one day. A Franciscan came to visit him, wearing a long beard and a coarse habit, and assuring him that he had come from Bosina, where he had laboured for a long time for the conversion of the infidels. His Lordship congratulated him, and rejoicing in hearing the recital of the conversions of which he spoke, he kept him with him for two days. The religious said that he was sent to reside at

Arpaja. When he was on the point of setting out, he asked for the faculties of a confessor; but here Alphonso stopped short. "I rejoice at your zeal," he said to him, "but it is necessary that I should act in this matter in concert with your superiors." He made inquiries; the religious proved to be nothing but an impostor and a renegade; he was afterwards arrested and expelled from the diocese.

The office of preacher in the church of the Annunziata at Arienzo was conferred on a graduate, who was a Capuchin Father, an exemplary man, and who was considered to be very learned by the religious of his order. Alphonso granted him license to preach, but he exacted a previous examination before giving that of confessor. This was not what the preacher wanted; he commenced the exercises of Lent, but never sat in the confessional; he often visited his Lordship without manifesting any intention of being examined. Alphonso always showed him great kindness, and all the Lent passed without a word being said about confession by the Capuchin Father.

When the Father Abbot Muscati, of the monastery of Monte Virgine, was entrusted with the direction of the monastery of Airola, his Lordship went to congratulate him. The abbot afterwards came to see him at Fascio, and asked him for faculties for two religious. His Lordship begged to be excused, as he could not acquiesce in the request, without a scruple of conscience, before having had proofs of the capability of

these two religious. The abbot insisted and entreated, but his Lordship would not do it. When he saw such immoveable firmness, the abbot had not courage to ask for jurisdiction for himself, and he did it through the medium of a person of authority, but this was without success; he was obliged to present himself in person: his Lordship acted with prudence—he conversed with him alone and without formality, and proposed some doubts to him, after which he conferred the powers on him. As to the two religious, they did not present themselves until after they had studied morals for a considerable time.

Several superiors of monasteries, informed of his Lordship's firmness on this point, came to pay him a visit of ceremony on their entrance into office, and they did not neglect to visit him again when opportunity offered; but they made up their minds to remain without jurisdiction, rather than expose themselves to being tried; his Lordship never exempted them from examination, in spite of his demonstrations of friendship towards them.

Abbot Caraffa came to pay his respects to him and to ask for jurisdiction. "Very well," said his Lordship, "but return another day, because I wish to know what books you used in your studies on morals." When the abbot saw that an examination was in question, he did not feel anxious to be a confessor any longer. A priest for whom our saint had much esteem, and whose knowledge he was acquainted with, especially in regard to morals, came one day to ask for a

confessor's jurisdiction for a superior of a monastery, assuring him that this religious was well fitted, and, above all, that he led an exemplary life; but as his Lordship did not know him, he could not persuade him. Another religious, a Dominican, and one whom his Lordship considered to be learned, but of a singular disposition, would not undergo the trial; in consequence he was obliged to forego the title of confessor.

A Father arrived at the monastery of the Dominican Fathers at Durazzano, who had been provincial and even vicar-apostolical at Smyrna. When he presented himself in order to obtain his powers, his Lordship very politely told him that he could not exempt him from the examination, both on account of avoiding scruples and to prevent giving an occasion of offence to others. The Father answered that he consented to it; "But you do not know, my Lord," added he, "how many Jesuits I have rejected who have been approved by the Propaganda!" The Dominican Father returned therefore, accompanied by Don Xavier dell' Acqua, the steward at Caserto; his Lordship invited them both to dinner. Alphonso's refusal had displeased Don Xavier; he begged him therefore to grant him that the abbot should only be examined by indirect questions during the meal; Alphonso consented, and had in fact cause to rejoice in the proofs which the Father-Master gave of his theological knowledge.

When Abbot Pignatelli, whose merits were celebrated, and who afterwards became Archbishop

of Bari and of Capua, went to the abbey of Airola, his Lordship, who did not know him well, replied, when he was asked to give the abbot faculties for confessions, that he could not give them if the abbot did not previously reply to the questions which he would put to him. This indirect refusal offended the abbot; he came to visit Alphonso, however, who treated him with every mark of attention, but never spoke of the jurisdiction. The grand-vicar, who saw his Lordship's inflexibility towards the abbot, at last said to him, to do away with his scruples, "Suppose, my Lord, that when the abbot comes again to visit you, we try to make the conversation fall upon theology, and if he proves his capacity by his answers you can give him permission to hear confessions without fear." Alphonso agreed to the plan; he put it into execution on the very next visit of the abbot's, and the result was completely in favour of the learned religious. His Lordship was rejoiced at it, and immediately gave him the faculties. Abbot Pignatelli was able to appreciate his Lordship's impartiality, and had the most sincere attachment for him from that time. Alphonso on his part was convinced of the abbot's merit, and took a great deal of pains to cause him to be nominated Archbishop of Bari.

There was a priest belonging to Forchia d'Arpaja, who was a great preacher, and had been fixed on to give the Lent discourses in the country of Real Valle. Chevalier Negroni, the chief superintendent at Caserto, begged his Lordship

to give this priest the needful faculties for confession; but notwithstanding Alphonso's great obligations to this magistrate, he positively refused his request. Don Negroni reiterated his prayer, but with no better success.

Several subjects came from the state of Benevento into the diocese to preach there during Lent; but his Lordship gave none of them leave to hear confessions without a previous examination. This conduct displeased Mgr. Colombini, the Archbishop of Benevento; so when Don Pascal Bartolini, a priest of Airola, was nominated preacher at Paolisi, in the diocese of Benevento, and went to ask the Archbishop for his benediction, and for the faculties of a confessor, "You must resign yourself," said the prelate, "and undergo an examination; for Bishop Liguori has acted in this manner to those belonging to me." Don Pascal submitted, and satisfied the Archbishop. Alphonso was not dissatisfied at it, but would have wished it to have been done through zeal, and not from resentment.

It may be truly said that Alphonso was as prompt in withdrawing faculties for hearing confessions from those who proved to be unworthy of them, as he was prudent in giving them at all; the regulars especially experienced his severity in this respect. Having heard that a religious of Arpaja, whom he had nominated to be a confessor, was in the habit of despising the poor, and occupying himself too much with the direction of some devotees, he sent for him and immediately withdrew the powers. He also

suspended several others, and some he even expelled from his diocese.

Our readers will thank us for citing here the rules which Alphonso drew up for confessors, and which he accurately observed himself.

ALPHONSO'S ADVICE TO CONFESSORS.

1. The confessor ought to study moral theology thoroughly, and to go over the most difficult points every day.

2. The confessor ought to have great charity, particularly in regard to sinners who need most assistance.

3. The confessor ought to have the same degree of charity for all, without distinction of persons.

4. The confessor ought not to prefer hearing women's confessions to those of men.

5. The confessor ought to interest himself in his penitents, more than a father for his children, because he is concerned for souls and eternity.

6. The confessor ought to feel as much zeal for a dirty and ragged woman as for a princess.

7. The confessor who makes a choice of certain penitents through sympathy, loses the fruit of his labours, and endangers the loss of his conscience and his honour.

8. The confessor ought not to be scornful and irascible, for by that he would estrange his penitents from the sacrament of penance.

9. The confessor ought to avoid all useless

and curious discoursing in the sacred tribunal, which would expose him to profane the sacrament of penance.

10. The confessor ought to be very careful in his intercourse with the backsliding, the occasional and the habitual sinner, the scandalous, the calumniator, and those of bad faith. Before being absolved, these sinners must first fulfil their duty, and give very definite and certain signs of conversion.

11. The confessor ought to be very prudent in his interrogatories; he ought to do his duty, but with modesty and brevity, especially when any vice against holy purity is in question.

12. The confessor ought to be a father, a master, a physician, and a judge; and to be so he ought to be able to love, to instruct, to heal and to judge the penitent.

Rispoli, Vita del B. Alfonso Maria de Liguorio, p. 75—76, Napoli, 1834.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Convinced of the importance of the duties of a parish priest, Alphonso gave the most scrupulous attention to their election. "A zealous priest," said he, "sanctifies all his people; but an indifferent one does not preserve the good, and can only do harm." Alphonso did not require great learning in them, but he wished that they

should have a sufficiency of information, and above all, that they should be versed in morals, and capable of instructing the people properly. One day when he assisted at a conference on cases of morals, he saw an old priest who was greatly embarrassed; he was uneasy at this from the first; but when he was told that even these answers had been given to him beforehand, and that he had them in his hat, and yet could not remember them, he immediately removed him from the charge of his parish; however, in order to spare his reputation, (for he was otherwise a good man,) he appointed him to be canon on the first vacancy.

The meetings for the parishes always took place in his presence, and he wished the examinations to be made with severity. Among the candidates who presented themselves at one of these meetings, there was an aged priest and confessor. He pretended that these titles gave him a claim to the benefice, which ought to be awarded to him through justice in preference to the others. But when Alphonso proceeded to the examination, the old priest evinced such extreme ignorance, that he not only did not have the parish, but he was suspended from exercising his powers of confessor, to his great confusion. In another meeting, one of the postulants, besides the precision of the answers which he gave to one of the examiners, even quoted to him the pages, the chapters, and the very paragraphs of the treatises on morals; but he could not answer in the same manner to the questions ad-

dressed to him by the others; his Lordship got suspicions about it, however, as he could not have any certainty about it, he felt obliged to entrust the parish to him, though he did so with regret. He, however, evinced his dissatisfaction to the examiners in general, and urged them to fulfil their office faithfully, representing to them how much he sins who co-operates in the nomination of a parish priest who is unworthy of his ministry. An admirable delicacy presided also in these examinations.

Don Pascal Deodatus, the priest, having been presented to the meeting for the vacant parish of St. John the Baptist of Bucciano, was rejected by the examiners, because he had followed authors opposed to the system of his Lordship. When Alphonso knew the result of the conference, he was surprised at seeing the cause of this condemnation. "The authors whom he follows," said he to the examiners, "are standard and approved;" and on their replying that the answers were not in accordance with his moral theology, "I have no authority to act as a law," said his Lordship, "and in a matter of opinion every one is at liberty to follow his own where the Church has not condemned it." He undertook the defence of Deodatus, who obtained the benefice in consequence.

When the living of St. Angelus of Mungulariis became vacant, the deacon, Angelus Stasi, was the one who answered the best among the numerous candidates. His Lordship witnessed it with satisfaction, but in consideration of the age

and merits of a priest who was also a candidate, he begged the deacon to be patient for this time, and he spoke to him with so much humility that the young man was quite confused at it, and the examiners were still more so. However, if charity made him give the preference to the priest, he did not wish the deacon's rights to be neglected, and the cathedral parish having become vacant a little while afterwards, the election to which belonged to the chapter, his Lordship immediately wrote to Archbishop Rainone, to beg that for his sake the parish should be given to the deacon Stasi, and his request was granted.

He always preferred sanctity to learning. Prince de la Riccia begged him to appoint a priest who was his tenant and a man of great knowledge, to the care of a parish; but his Lordship refused. "The priest in question," he wrote to the prince, "has been inconstant and far from edifying until now; I do not wish to enter into particulars for fear of tiring you. He also has come in person to ask me, and has urged the matter; but he must have patience for the present, because I do not think him fit to be a parish priest. When he is of riper age and has given more proofs of perseverance in goodness, I will not forget to provide for him." Moderate abilities and exemplary conduct were in his eyes sufficient to make a good parish priest. "Those of great talents," said he, "are more solicitous about the dead than the living. They are only full of erudition and spec-

ulation. If they preach, they are not understood, they do not lower themselves to teach children, and will only instruct clerics. I wish the priest to find pleasure in remaining with the dying, and that he should be able to pass his time in talking to one of little capacity, while endeavouring to teach him the Pater Noster." He therefore chose subjects who proved themselves to be humble and submissive, in preference to those who set up for learned. He who made no claim to anything, but went and seated himself in the lowest place, was sure to gain his Lordship's heart and to be preferred to all the rest. The parish or the vice-cure of the Annunziata, which he had himself established, was vacant; a great many subjects presented themselves at the election, and amongst the number was to be found Don Francis Ratta, who came merely, as the lowest of all, and without seeking for notice; but his Lordship considered him the most worthy, and gave the living to him. "He was already very worthy of it," said Alphonso, "and he has rendered himself still more so by not asking for it. Dignus et dignior quia non petit."

A priest came to offer himself at Airola, who was sent by the Abbot Caracciolo, who had the right of presentation for the living belonging to the parish church of the Olivetain Fathers. Alphonso was surprised that the abbot should have proposed a subject to him whose proud and quarrelsome disposition was well known, and above all, one who had wickedly tormented his father by going to law against him. "If he has ill-

treated the author of his days," said he to the abbot, "how can I make him the father of my poor children?" The abbot, however, still supported his protegé; he produced a number of certificates, and did all that was possible in order to attain his end; but the bishop remained inflexible, and forced the abbot to present another subject.

Alphonso did not attend to morals and knowledge alone, he also examined as to the canditate's aptness for acquitting himself in the functions of the ministry. He had an admirable degree of discernment and prudence. A holy man, but one destitute of energy, or a man whose sanctity did not extend further than to think of himself without anxiety for others, could not, according to him, make a good parish priest. When the parish of St. Thomas became vacant, Don Matthew Conegno was proposed to him as chaplain, who was a man of advanced age, very well informed, and of irreproachable character; every one looked upon him as if already elected, but it was not so; his Lordship knowing how weak his character was, and considering the insubordinate spirit of the inhabitants, feared that such a pastor was incapable of bringing such people under obedience to him; and so he nominated the young chaplain John Fusaro in preference, although but recently raised to the priesthood, because he believed him more fit to obtain the submission of his parishioners, and that he had more strength to bear up against the labours of the sacred ministry. And his foresight proved

to be true, Fusaro was an indefatigable labourer; he knew how to gain the esteem of all, and became an excellent parish priest.

He wished from the first to cause the livings to be considered honourable, so as to have good occupants. Cardinal Spinelli had adopted the same course at Naples, by choosing his bishops from the incumbents. Alphonso followed his example by raising the parish priests to the prebends. It may be said, that before his time those who were candidates for parishes were only the priests who were thought least of amongst the clergy, and who for the most part were distinguished in no way, and of no rank; but when the parishes became as the ladders whereby to reach a more elevated position, the first gentlemen laboured to obtain them, and in this way the livings were administered with zeal and to the great advantage of souls.

A prebend became vacant, the election to which belonged to the Pope; his Lordship presented two parish priests to him; his secretary, who was placed on the list, was dissatisfied at seeing himself neglected; Alphonso sent for him, and begged him to forgive him for having left him out. "I wish you well," he said to him, "I know your labours, and I do not lose sight of you; but for this time I am constrained through motives of justice to decide in favour of the others, in order to encourage them to labour much; be patient, therefore, and I will find means of providing for you." His Lordship was deceived nevertheless, for the secretary had suc-

ceeded in being seconded at Rome, and the dignity of canon was conferred on him. Alphonso rejoiced at it; "It is the Blessed Virgin," he said to him, "who has aided you; you are poor, and you have a great many relations to assist."

He required almost the same qualities from curates as from the beneficed clergy. "Curates," said he, "ought to assist in all the parish work; they have to visit the sick and the different houses; if they do not know how to perform these things properly, and if their conduct is not good, they are a burthen instead of an assistance." He obliged the incumbent of the church of St. Felix, who was aged and very infirm, to take a curate as an assistant, but he reserved the choice to himself. Several candidates were proposed to him, and each person wished to magnify the merits of the one belonging to him. "The provision is made," said Alphonso; "I have selected him from the seminary." Then explaining himself more clearly, he pointed out a young man of merit, who had been recently ordained priest, as the one he had nominated for the situation. "If I do not employ him now," said he, "he will go to ruin through idleness and dissipation; there will be an end to all the good he has learnt at the seminary, and bye-and-bye he will not like to submit to the yoke in order to labour for the service of souls and of the Church."

He was as severe in regard to the residence of the parish priests as he had shown himself careful in procuring their advantage; he could not

bear them to ask his leave to go to preach the Lenten sermons elsewhere, while they were more than ever needed in their own church. It happened once that an incumbent had promised to go to preach the Lent sermons in the country of Biccari, but when he applied to his Lordship for permission he received a positive refusal. "If you wish to preach in Lent," he said to him, "it is not necessary to run into other parishes." The priest begged, and represented to him that he left an excellent curate in his place, but all was useless: "I do not wish for the curate," said Alphonso; "the incumbent is the pastor, and he ought not to go away from his flock at any time, much less during Lent."

The nuns of Arienzo solicited to obtain a parish priest as extraordinary confessor, and he refused it for the same reason, but getting scrupulous about it he afterwards granted their request. "I do not know," said he, "how far they may be in want of him."

The canon Don Thomas de Curtis wished to exchange his prebend for a better; he mentioned as a title of recommendation, that he had been a parish priest and professor at the seminary at the same time, and that not without much difficulty. "That is not a recommendation," said Alphonso to him. "A parish priest, and at the same time professor at the seminary! How then were you able to attend to your parishioners?" He granted him what he wished nevertheless, but in consideration of other merits, not in the least for those on which he valued him-

self, and which he believed to be the principal ones.

The chapter appointed the priest Don Dominic Russo to take charge of the parish attached to the cathedral; he was at that time the master of the public schools. Alphonso was rejoiced at the appointment, because he was a man of great merit; but as he continued to give up his time to the instruction of the schools, he sent for him, and told him that the employment of a master could not be united with the care of a parish. "The parish priest," said he, "ought to be free from every other charge, in order to be ready to serve his parishioners in all their needs." This happened in November, and as Russo had made engagements to give lessons he begged his Lordship to allow him to continue them until August, but he could obtain no concession; "If you do not get free from this charge," said he, "I will force you to do so."

If any village priest often showed himself in the town, Alphonso did not delay in sending for him, in order to inquire how things were going on in his parish, and to advise him to residence, causing him to understand that he did not like to see him away from his flock; and if he continued to frequent the town unnecessarily, the bishop proceeded to warnings and reprimands, which he always did with most severity if he knew that there were any sick person to be visited, or any scandal to be done away with in the parish.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The holy bishop suffered still more, when he was obliged to make the collation to benefices.* Even those which were simple and without the care of souls, but which required residence, caused him great anxiety. Not satisfied with the good conduct of the subjects, he further wished that they should have great merit as regarded the Church and the people. "The Church and the people," said he, "are both interested in the collation to benefices." He showed no partiality towards any one; everything was done according to justice, and he never made any distinction between Greek and Roman. He had a little book wherein the names of the priests and clerks of the whole diocese were inserted, with the merits and the demerits of each; when it was necessary to make an appointment, he had usually no need of any further inquiry. A nomination was made without

* Although the diocese of St. Agatha was not extensive, yet, with the exception of Capua, there was not one in the kingdom which was to be compared to it in regard to the great number of its benefices. The diocese included 30,000 souls, and the revenue of the benefices amounted to 36,000 ducats: the cathedral alone numbered twenty-six canons, besides five dignitaries, and thirteen chaplains or chanters. There was also a college at St. Agatha, consisting of fourteen chaplain priests besides; the other colleges of the diocese are those of Arienzo, Frasso, Airola, Durazzano, and Arpaja. All the clergy are on respectable footing there, each one possessing enough to enable him to live at his ease.

delay; as soon as one incumbent expired, a successor was appointed. It often happened that Alphonso could not decide immediately, because he saw good conduct counterbalanced by some defect; he was still more embarrassed if he met with several ecclesiastics of equal merit. In this case he took the opinion of impartial people. "There are three amongst whom I do not know which to choose," he wrote to Archdeacon Rainone, from Arienzo; "no one could be more fit for St. Agatha than Don John Fusaro, the incumbent of St. Thomas; he is an excellent priest, but he has hardly been a parish priest eight or nine months; he does a great deal of good in the parish, and yet if he quits it he will leave all the good he has commenced in an imperfect state; and then he is very young besides. The second who I have in view is Don Pius de Luccia, who does not lack merit, and he has been curate at St. Thomas for three years, and if I have removed him from there, it has only been on account of his ill health; he is older than the first; he has been a candidate oftener, and is not inferior to him in point of conduct. The third is Don Pascal Deodatus, who is at present the incumbent of Bucciano. He possesses more learning than the other two, he is more advanced in age, and is a man of great judgment. I want to know your Reverence's opinion about these three subjects."

It was in this manner that his Lordship weighed the merits and demerits of each one in the balance of the sanctuary, and took them into

consideration several times over before God. A chaplain of Arienzo having died, his physician came to his Lordship in order to recommend a priest; there were three candidates; "If I had three chaplaincies," said Alphonso, "I would give them to the three candidates, as I think them all worthy of it; but as it is not so, I must weigh the merits of all, and see which one has most weight in God's balance."

Two other priests of merit were also candidates for a chaplain's situation, and as they both appeared to have equally good claims, Alphonso could not decide. "My Lord," the archdeacon then said to him, "when a benefice exempt from the care of souls is in question, your Lordship is not obliged to confer it on the most worthy; you can then name whoever you like, provided he is not unworthy." "All that may be very good," replied Alphonso, "but as for me, in every appointment, even for those which have no charge of souls, I still wish that the most worthy should obtain the preference. When one does wrong towards a third, one's own conscience is not at rest." Archdeacon Rainone, who enjoyed his Lordship's entire confidence, assured me that he went through a real martyrdom every time a living became vacant. One day Alphonso said to him, "The anguish which the death of this canon will cause me is so great, that I would willingly give my life for his; the canon will only die once, while I shall die more than a hundred times."

Alphonso did not confine himself merely to the

town of St. Agatha in looking for a successor to one who was dead; he searched through the whole diocese. In the case of which we speak, St. Agatha, Arienzo, and Arpaja had each presented a candidate, and his Lordship looked on them all as his children, and as having an equal right to the possessions of their common mother. "I know," he said in a letter to Archdeacon Rainone, "that the citizens of Arienzo will pretend that the one proposed by them ought to be preferred, and yet I see no candidate of merit for St. Agatha but Don John Fusaro, who is very young, and has laboured very little as yet in his parish. Tell me your opinion, because if candidates are to be found who are decidedly preferable, belonging to other parts of the diocese, it would be unjust to prefer those of the cathedral, since the clergy of the whole diocese only form one body; this conduct besides is advantageous for the public good, for if it is seen that promotion to appointments is made indiscriminately in favour of clerics of the diocese, all will apply with ardour to render themselves more worthy of them."

For the same reason he never favoured any stranger, though his predecessors had done differently. Alphonso would have considered it an injustice to stand in the way of those of his own diocese. There was a priest of Cajazzo, who was a man of merit, of an advanced age, and a doctor, who had rendered himself half a citizen through his constant residence in St. Agatha; through the assistance of some friends in the chapter, he succeeded in being

included in the number of the candidates for the prebendal stall. When Alphonso heard that he had obtained the consent of all the chapter and the approbation of the town, he also promised to second his promotion, although he did so with regret. But when he learnt that the candidate had made use of sinister means, he immediately wrote to Don Michael Nazzi, who had proposed this nomination to him: "Your Reverence ought not to imagine that I ever will make a provision in favour of strangers."

As long as the election was not consummated Alphonso trembled and remained in anxiety, and if he received any new light, he was immediately ready to retract what he had done. One day, after having decided as to the person on whom a vacant prebend should be conferred, having signed the letter containing the patent, and the servant being all ready to take it, a violent storm came on, which kept him in the house, and thus suspended the delivery of the nomination. Alphonso received a letter from the archdeacon during this interval, which informed him of the merits of another candidate. He directly took back his own, tore it, and despatched another to the more worthy competitor who had just been pointed out to him. However, the merits of the second candidate must have appeared to him incontestibly great, for otherwise he always remained immoveably fixed to his first determination.

Any bad conduct was a sufficient cause for excluding a candidate from a living. It once

happened that an excellent priest committed no other fault than that, being the chaplain, he frequented a convent of nuns, contrary to the wishes of his Lordship, and that he was incorrigible in spite of several reprimands. When he afterwards endeavoured to obtain a prebend, Alphonso said to him, "You shall never be a canon, if you do not disengage yourself from this convent."—"My Lord," replied the priest, "I am first waiting for the appointment as canon to be able to leave it." He was nominated canon, but this was not until after he had first given up frequenting the convent, and shown proofs of amendment to his Lordship.

From the time he entered the diocese, he had declared that no one's assistance was to be used in order to obtain livings, and that all the efforts of the sort which might be made, would be so many means of becoming unworthy of them; and during all the time that he was bishop of St. Agatha he never listened to the solicitations of persons of the highest rank. Merit was the only claim in his sight, and even merit vanished when it sought the support of a protector.

A prebend was to be given at Arienzo, and Alphonso decided on giving it to a priest who seemed to surpass the others, especially because he was the only one amongst the canons who had not got any one to intercede in his behalf, which edified his Lordship, and principally served to confirm him in his choice. He was quite ready to expedite the patents for him, when he saw him present himself with a letter of recom-

mendation from Don John Baptist Filomarino, the Prince della Rocca. "God forgive you," his Lordship then said to him; "I was determined to give you the prebend, but since you have brought me this letter I have changed my mind: *indignus quia petisti.*" The poor priest was greatly confused; he wept, and he entreated, but there was no help for it. Alphonso replied to the prince, hoping that he would not take it amiss, since, if he gave such a precedent, he would open the way to other and scandalous intrigues.

While Alphonso was at Nocera, it happened that he had to fill up a prebend at St. Agatha. Canon Michael Jermieri, his secretary, informed him of this, and at the same time recommended his brother for it; he proposed him with confidence, as his Lordship had received his services on several occasions. He wrote to our Father Jerome on the same day to obtain his support: this was a crime in his Lordship's eyes. On returning to St. Agatha he blamed Jermieri greatly for having taken such a step, and refused the prebend to his brother, which he would probably have granted at the single solicitation of his secretary. "Be assured," he said to him, "that if any one has recourse to such methods, I shall consider him unworthy for that very reason."

While Mgr. Pignatelli, who was elected archbishop of Bari, was at Arienzo, he recommended a young man of good character to our saint, in order to obtain a living which was vacant for him, but he received a positive refusal. "When you are a bishop," Alphonso replied to him, "you

will be free to do as you please; but as for me, I wish merit to proceed directly from the person, and not from the recommendations." He was in the habit of saying on such occasions, "I pay no attention to recommendations; I like to examine into the merits and talents of the subjects, and then I do as God and my conscience may dictate." Even the king's ministers, who saw his impartiality in giving livings, neither made any nomination nor recommended any one in the diocese. The Marquis of Marco alone wrote to him once indeed, but quite in a friendly manner, to beg him to confer a living which was vacant on a young ecclesiastic, whose merits, he said, had caused him to take this liberty, but even this recommendation only served to throw discredit on the protegé.

A priest of Majano, who was very eager to be a prebendary, got the Princess de la Riccia to intercede in his favour for a vacant benefice at the cathedral. Alphonso received the solicitation, but extricated himself out of it with so much address that he seemed neither to give a refusal nor a consent. "Canon N—, who aspires to the prebend," he replied on the 3rd of March, 1773, "has not yet presented his request to me; when he does so, I will certainly present it to his Holiness, the Sovereign Pontiff. This priest would then do well to recommend himself to God, in order that the Pope may be enlightened and see whether this person has a claim on it over all the others." The request was sent, but nothing more, and the priest was

never a prebendary as long as his Lordship ruled over the diocese.

Alphonso was meek and humble in ordinary things, but in those which concerned his conscience he acted without consideration for any person. Once he had decided to give a canonry to Don Dominic Brunon, all the other candidates having had the misfortune to get recommendations. The grand-vicar himself had not been able to incline the balance for the one he favoured, and the secretary had no better success; when they saw the case was desparate, they stirred up the physicians and Canon Don Marco Anthonio D' Ambrosio to intercede with his Lordship, whose trusty friend he was. "My dear canon," replied Alphonso, "you cannot think how I am beset by recommendations, and how much this torments me, but I have determined on Don Dominic Brunon. This good priest has an excellent character, and no want of merits of any sort. During the late epidemic he so generously devoted himself to the relief of the sick, that he only slept beside the dying." "Then you have not thought of this other good priest," replied the canon, pointing out the grand-vicar's favourite. His Lordship immediately perceived the plot, and cut it short. "I am bishop here," said he, "and no one else; you have forgotten that." He said this in a tone which entirely disconcerted the canon. "I am only a depositary," continued Alphonso, "and not master over the distribution of livings, and I can only distribute them to those who have rendered

themselves worthy of them by their labours; I can give away what belongs to me, but not the blood of the poor. If we do not confer the benefice on him who has purchased it by his merits, we shall always afterwards feel remorse."

Another living became vacant, and a priest belonging to the diocese obtained the interest of another priest whom he believed to possess great influence with his Lordship; he wrote to tell him to ask for it for him for the love of the Blessed Virgin, saying that if he adopted this method he would certainly be heard, as his Lordship never refused anything which was asked in her name: but as Alphonso did not consider him worthy to be appointed, because he had procured recommendations, he replied, "Tell him that I refuse to give him the living for the love of the Blessed Virgin, for our Lady only likes what is good."

He detested every sort of recommendation, because he dreaded even the very shadow of simony. He used to say that recourse to recommendations and simony were twin sisters, and that they had the same devil for their father. The least suspicion on this head made him draw back, and especially if a third person interfered as to whose scrupulosity of conscience he entertained any doubt. "These sort of people," he said, "never render a service to any one without being paid for it." He was dissatisfied with a priest, who was certainly possessed of great talents, but who took little pains about his parish; in order to avoid acting either with too much

lenity or with too much severity towards him, he thought of making him a prebendary. He had sent the letters to Naples for Rome, when the priest, who was ignorant of Alphonso's kind intentions, stated his claim to the grand-vicar, reminding him besides of his obligations to him. His Lordship was indignant at such conduct, and, though it was ten o'clock at night, he sent a courier on purpose to Naples, in order to get back his recommendation; not satisfied with that, he ordered the priest to give in his resignation, and he was obliged to remain without a living and without a prebend as long as Alphonso ruled over the diocese.

In several cathedrals, and even in the collegiate establishments, they professed to consider the chaplains as merely the prebendary's servants, which caused the latter to look down on them, and to dislike seeing them raised to their own dignity. Alphonso, however, who only thought of merit, was always ready to advance such of the chaplains as were worthy of it to the prebendal stalls, so that the situation of chaplain became as a ladder whereby to ascend to the prebends.

The election of the chaplains of St. Agatha was made by the bishop; in order to be free from this office, and to promote the greater good of the Church, Alphonso decreed that these situations for the time to come should be the reward of particular merit. As their office is to chant in the choir, he established meetings for chanting; and therefore all the clerics and

priests, in the hope of becoming chaplains, applied themselves to the Gregorian plain chanting, and the choir was thus greatly improved. Three candidates presented themselves for the first of these situations which became vacant; the one was a chaplain belonging to the Annunziata, of sixty years of age, another was a priest of about forty, and the third a seminarist clerk, Don John Fusaro, who was sixteen. After the meeting the examiners declared that young Fusaro was the most to be praised. "Well," said Alphonso, "let us act without minding the appearance of doing wrong." He gave the situation to the young man. The priest was distressed, for he had felt so sure of obtaining it that he prepared an entertainment beforehand. Some people wished to intercede with Alphonso in his favour; "The law is made," he answered, "I cannot in conscience reject young Fusaro, since the claim is on his side."

The exemplary bishop, who had the Church's glory alone at heart, strictly obliged the canons to residence. A chaplain of St. Agatha experienced a great disappointment in this matter. He had been secretary to Count de Cerreto for a long time, and only went to the cathedral from time to time. A prebend became vacant, and he immediately entered the lists. His friends asked how he could reside at St. Agatha. "Every one proclaims that this bishop is a saint, and that he loves justice," was his reply to them; "this being the case, the prebend is due to me, because I am the oldest of all the chaplains."

He went to his Lordship and exposed all his claims. "You are quite new to me," answered Alphonso, "for I never have seen you at church." "That is true," replied the canon, with a complaisant air, "for I have had the honour of being Count Cerreto's secretary for a number of years." "Well," responded his Lordship, "but why has not the Count made you a prebendary?" Then he added in a more serious tone, "Don Francis," (for this was the name of the chaplain,) "you either must give up your situation as secretary as soon as possible, and come and perform your duties at the church, or I shall cause you to be no longer chaplain." When he came out of the palace, the friends of Don Francis asked what was the result of his interview. "Everything is put an end to," he replied; "the prebendary is not for me, and I run the risk of losing my chaplaincy besides."

A canon of one of the colleges of the diocese was occupied in an important charge which prevented his frequenting the church; when his Lordship heard of it, he sent for him; he placed the obligation he was under of attending to his church before his eyes with severity, and then added, "Either quit your new employment, or give up being a prebendary." He was obliged to choose, and the hope of a better future getting the better of the consideration of what was for the present good, he renounced the prebend. He was a worthy ecclesiastic, but his Lordship never allowed himself to be overcome by any human respect.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

ALPHONSO'S great impartiality and equity in giving benefices, naturally displeased candidates of unjust arrogance. He often had a great deal to suffer on this account, and he was often put in dangerous positions in consequence. He who seeks for a thing with which he is not acquainted, and who does not know what is fit for him, indulges in all sorts of excess without being ashamed of it; the more distinguished such candidates happened to be by birth, the more readily they gave vent to railings. They even went the length of insulting the bishop, and saying before his face, "You are unjust, you have neither conscience nor equity; you ought to blush at being a bishop." Such speeches were often made use of by these wicked people when provoked. Any one else would have been angry at them, and would have felt resentment, but Alphonso was never either disturbed or distressed. He pitied their anger, and never opened his mouth except in blessing those who cursed him. Such a rare instance of goodness gained the admiration of all good people, without however putting the unjust pretenders to silence.

A priest of advanced age, but with no merit, presented himself for a prebend, and this after having been degraded under the former bishop. "I wish to assist you in getting your living,"

said his Lordship to him, "but I also wish that you should render yourself capable of hearing confessions." He gave him a copy of his book on morals at the same time; but the priest would listen to nothing, without however in the least renouncing his pretensions, which he founded on merits which he certainly did not possess. "I cannot in conscience nominate you," said Alphonso to him, "if you do not at least render yourself fit to hear confessions." The irritated priest then arose, made a gesture of ill-humour, and almost tore the book, which he threw on the table, saying, "Plague take you and your morals!" He then turned on his heel and went out, giving vent to his fury. Such audacious conduct made every one indignant but his Lordship, who was not moved by it. "See what it is to be a bishop," he said quietly; "if a father does not bear with the impertinences of his children, who else will put up with them?" A priest, who had been unable to get a prebend to which he aspired, without being worthy of it, got angry at his Lordship in consequence, slandered him, and even accused him to the king. Iniquity has the peculiarity of never yielding, even where it has nothing to hope for. The sovereign, who knew Alphonso's justice and impartiality, simply answered, "I can do nothing; Bishop Liguori exercises his rights as a bishop." Another prebend became vacant about the same time; his Lordship then forgot his injuries, and bestowed it on the very man who had appealed against him. This nomination displeased every

one, and especially Father Caputo. "If you give to those who oppose you," he said to his Lordship, "you will have no peace for the future." "That is true," replied Alphonso, "but at the time of the first gift I thought the competitor more worthy than the appealer, and at the second I found that the latter was the most worthy." "All that is very well," replied the father, "but people do not think that it is thus; they believe that appealing against you and saying a great many abusive things to you, is the true means of obtaining what they aspire to; and thus insolence glories in not paying any respect to your person, and in causing you a thousand difficulties." "Poor creatures," answered Alphonso; "they do not know what they wish for, and try to get what they can; but for me I ought to bear with them, and to do my duty."

Another priest, who was dissatisfied at his pretensions having failed, addressed a statement to the king, filled with falsehoods against Alphonso, whom he designated as unjust. The accusation was sent to Alphonso in order that he might justify himself; he did so, but so far from seeking to injure his calumniator, he only tried to excuse him. The priest was not free from blame for other causes, and people endeavoured to get Alphonso to bring him to justice at his own tribunal; but he not only rejected the advice with horror, but always treated this priest with great kindness from that time. A prebend became vacant after this, and as the merits of

the latter were not equal to those of his rival, every one suggested to Alphonso that he had better reject the daring priest who had appealed against him, and it was believed that it would be so; but as the bishop considered the merit of the two candidates as equal, he gave the preference to the one who had accused him.

Although the darts of envy missed their aim, and calumnies could not prejudice the king's mind against Alphonso, whose probity he knew too well for that, the wicked did not cease to cause him great uneasiness. His Lordship thought of nominating a priest as chaplain, whose age and merits rendered him praiseworthy. A deacon, who had studied successfully at Naples, wished to become a candidate also; Alphonso told him of his intentions, and granted him the favour of merely being present at the election as a postulant, promising to provide for him on another occasion. The deacon was approved of on these conditions; but, without attending to them, he set up claims to the chaplaincy; finding that he was rejected, he burst out into a torrent of abuse against his Lordship, and, in concert with his brother, appealed to the attorney-general of the king for justice. However, Alphonso nominated as chaplain the one whom he esteemed most worthy. He represented to the procurator that he had no intention of injuring the deacon in so doing, but that he thought he ought to give the preference to his competitor, who was a priest of advanced age, and who had acted as treasurer in the same

church for a long time ; and the procurator royal approved of his conduct.

The deacon did not rest here : he joined with his brother, who warmly espoused his interests, and they continued to pursue their appeals against the bishop, whom they were incessantly loading with accusations ; but Alphonso endured it all with immoveable patience. The deacon began to despair, and believing that nothing was open to him for the future, he stayed at Naples without daring to re-enter the diocese. But our saint, who had liked him before on account of his merits, excused his anger, and liked him still more than he had done previously ; and he gave him a proof of this attachment at an after period. A prebend became vacant at Arienzo at the end of some years. It was in the gift of the Pope. Many candidates came to the bishop of St. Agatha, and asked for his recommendation at the court of Rome. The deacon's brother presented himself, with the intention of supporting another of his brothers, who was a chaplain. Alphonso had forgotten the injuries he had received ; but he was not at all satisfied with the chaplain's conduct, so he addressed his letter of recommendation in favour of his young brother, who was at Naples, and of whom he had received excellent accounts. The gentleman was not satisfied, for, according to his idea, it was not proper that the younger should be preferred to the elder ; his Lordship, however, remained firm ; the gentleman on his side tried to prevail over him, and great embarrassment resulted to

the poor old man in consequence, who became the object of this gentleman's attacks, no less than of those of the other competitors. As he saw that the gentleman would not yield, he resolved, in order to extricate himself, not to give his recommendation either to the chaplain or to his brother. While all the candidates were trying to be favoured at Rome, the prebend was conferred on an old priest who had thought least about it. The result of all this was a source of distress to our saint. The gentleman persuaded himself that the bishop had secretly recommended the old priest, and believing that he had been trifled with, he gave vent to most hostile expressions of anger; he insulted his Lordship, and loaded him with abuse without any self-restraint. When Alphonso met with this ill-treatment, he said, "You wish to punish me. I have not deserved it; but I accept it for the love of Jesus Christ." The gentleman only became still more exasperated, and the offensive language of which he then made use seemed likely to be continued. His Lordship was distressed at it, not on account of the injury offered to himself, but because of that which was offered thereby to God, and he said to him, "I never attested anything on oath before, but now I solemnly swear to you, that I have made no recommendation at Rome." At last the attack became so serious, that the grand-vicar and the other members of the house who were witnesses of this scene, remained silent, not knowing what might happen if the gentleman became still more irritated.

The matter did not end here. The indignant gentleman turned his back on his Lordship, and threatened to destroy him, and to make him repent of what he had done. He made a protest filled with the blackest but most entirely calumnious accusations at the end of a few days, which he addressed to the king's counsel, and he himself, in his office of notary, announced a summons to his Lordship on the part of the procurator: "Take this piece of paper for the present," said the daring man; "I will consider you fit for other merchandise bye-and-bye." Alphonso took the piece of paper with a smiling air and thanked the notary. "I take it," he said, "but it is for the love of God." The gentleman got into a furious passion, loaded him again with abuse, and would not have ceased when he did, Father Caputo and Canon Don Benedict Barba told me, if these latter, together with others present, had not taken him by the arm and turned him out of the palace. Such shameless insolence towards a man who had scarcely a breath of life left, excited general indignation. His Lordship's great moderation could not be sufficiently admired, who constantly repeated, "Let him alone, it is nothing, he is a wretched being; I will do all I can to soften him and to satisfy him."

The attorney did not stop here. He heaped up fresh slanders, and inserted them in a libel which he addressed to the king. He designated Alphonso as a rebel against the royal will, asserting that he did not make promotions, and let the parishes suffer, in order to depend more

on the Pope than on his majesty. When this appeal was given to Alphonso, in order that he might justify himself, he said, "It is true that I cause suffering to the parishes, but all the rest is false." Our Father Matthias Corrado was present. After the bishop had sent his justification to the king, that prince, who was convinced of his integrity and uprightness, answered him through the Marquis of Marco, saying, "The king is persuaded of the wisdom of your conduct, and he trusts in your prudence in the gift of livings." This royal decision, which was quite unlooked for, freed his Lordship from all uneasiness, and the contest ended as much for his glory, as to the great confusion of the attorney and his partisans, as we shall see a little later.

In the meantime there was another instance of dissatisfaction at St. Agatha. A solicitor, whose unjust pretensions were not complied with, applied to the king, and accused his Lordship of a thousand slanderous things. One of the greatest causes of offence alleged in it was, that he despised the episcopal town, and resided at Arienzo, and that through a crying amount of injustice, he overlooked the citizens of St. Agatha in bestowing livings to give them to other inhabitants of the diocese. The king did not wish to decide on anything before having given the accused bishop the power to justify himself, and of replying to these accusations. He therefore transmitted them to him by Michael Nuzzi the syndic. Alphonso smiled on receiving them, and

said to him, "Then the situation of archpriest at Frasso, which is worth six hundred ducats, as well as those at Durazzano and of Real Valle, ought to be given to inhabitants of these places, whether they may be worthy of them or not! And those who may be more deserving are not to have any claim!" Alphonso sent his justification of his conduct to the king without loss of time. The following is a literal translation of this letter, which was published at the period of our Saint's canonization for the first time, and the original of which still exists in the archives at Naples. It was dated from Arienzo, May the 25th, 1773.

"Sire,

"I have received with respect the despatch sent by your Majesty, containing a petition from the inhabitants of St. Agatha, who allege two causes of complaint against me: first, that I do not reside at St. Agatha; and, secondly, that of conferring prebends on strangers in preference to the inhabitants of the town; on which your Majesty commands me to explain the motives of my conduct. I obey, and, first, I will commence with that which refers to my residence at Arienzo, and say that I lived at St. Agatha for about five years from the time of my entrance into the episcopate; but this place is very damp, on account of the high mountains which surround it, and I was compelled at last to breathe a drier air, on account of the infirmity under which I labour, which is asthma, and I did

so by the physician's orders. I came to Arienzo therefore, which is a portion of my diocese, and where my health has been much benefited, and I have remained here without scruple, as Pope Benedict XIV. declared in his bull of the 3rd of December, 1740, 'Ubi primum,' that it is enough if bishops reside in their diocese. 'Oportet ut personalem in ecclesia vestra, vel diœcesi, servetis residentiam.'

"I have now to answer the reproach which has been made against me of having appointed a stranger to a vacant prebend in the cathedral of St. Agatha. I do not understand how the inhabitants of this town can complain, since I have presented a priest, a fellow-citizen of their own, to the present Pontiff, and the holy Father has already granted their wishes; but the principal point in question is, that they pretend that the citizens ought always to have the preference in the appointments to prebends, even when more deserving subjects are to be found amongst the candidates.

"And now I must here beg your Majesty to consider well the following reasons. As to ecclesiastics who may be strangers, is it just that the citizens should always be preferred to them, without any very urgent cause, whenever they are not really unworthy? The question is, to know whether this preference ought always to take place, even to the exclusion of other ecclesiastics of the diocese who have greater merit. I do not doubt that, cœteris paribus, one ought to prefer those of the town; but in case the other

diocesans have evidently more talent, I do not see by what title the citizens ought to be preferred to them, except where there is an express law, whether of endowment or of custom; but neither the one nor the other exist at St. Agatha, for before my administration many diocesans were admitted into the chapter, who however cannot be designated as strangers, as the citizens and the diocesans are but parts of one body, and together form the clergy of the whole diocese. The appellants have adopted and accumulated together a number of principles which do not belong to the question, and they do not keep in view the principal end of the grave obligation which bishops have to prefer, in conferring benefices, and, above all, prebends, ecclesiastics who are the most worthy of their charge.

"I know that, according to the opinion of some probabilist authors, a bishop is free to give simple benefices to whoever he pleases, even should there be more worthy candidates; but I for my part have always held, according to the most common and most probable opinion, that a bishop is obliged to bestow all benefices, whether with or without a cure of souls, on the most worthy, if he would avoid a serious compromise of conscience; and this is in accordance with the canons, with the holy Fathers, as well as with unbiassed reason. For this reason I could not consent to bestow preferment on the less worthy instead of those who are more so, without a grievous injury to my conscience.

"In proof of what I have advanced in regard

to the canons, I will refer to the celebrated chapter 'Ut eccles. benef. sine dim.,' of Pope Innocent III., where we find that the Bishop of Milan was blamed for having conferred a simple benefice on a person of less talent than his competitor. Listen to the words of the Sovereign Pontiff: 'Debuisti ecclesiasticum officium et beneficium, in persona magis idonea dispensare;' and he adds, in the chapter Custos de officio custod., 'ad officium custodis tales ordinentur quales meliores et sanctiores esse viderint.' This is also expressed in other canons, which I shall pass over in silence, for fear of being too lengthy. The holy Fathers express the same opinions: St. Augustine says, 'Nec sane putandum est leve peccatum in personarum acceptione.....Quis enim ferat eligi divitem ad sedem honoris gloriæ ecclesiæ contempto paupere instructiore et sanctiore?' (S. Aug. c. 29. in cap. 2 Jacob.) St. Gregory the Great says, 'Ille qui Deo placuerit, et utilior visus fuerit, ordinetur.' (Lib. 4. epist. 47.) St. Thomas expresses himself in the same manner in the Quodlib. 6. art. 9, where he says, that a bishop ought to give benefices to the worthiest, that is to say, to those whom he knows to be most useful to the Church. This is confirmed by Innocent XI., who condemned the proposition 47, in which it is asserted that the decree of the Council of Trent as to the election of the most worthy to benefices, does not refer to benefices which are conferred at the end of a concursus: 'Loquitur quando fit concursus.' These are the words of the proposition, and they were condemned by

the Pope; therefore, even in regard to simple benefices, where there is no concursus, the most worthy ought to have the preference.

"But there is another, and a more weighty cause to favour this opinion, and that is, sound reason, to which I know not what can be opposed. Now reason teaches, and all the doctors hold it for certain, that ecclesiastical benefices have been left by founders, or instituted by the Church, for a double end; first, in order to know the merits of the subjects by rewarding them for the learning and the attainments which they are obliged to strive for, in order to render themselves more worthy of them; and as the bishop is not the master, but simply the distributor of benefices, he is bound, according to the precepts of distributive justice, to recognise the merits of the most worthy. St. Thomas very clearly teaches this in Q. 2. 64, art. 2. ad 1. where he says, that it is a serious sin to bestow benefices on ecclesiastics who are not the most worthy: "Si dignioribus præponantur, est peccatum personarum acceptionis' (which St. Thomas asserts to be undoubtedly a grave sin in article 1,) 'In dispensatione spiritualium, quorum prælatus ecclesiasticus non est Dominus, sed dispensator.' And the celebrated Properus Fagnano says, when writing on this point (in cap. Cum dilectus de consuet. No. 19,) that the preference of the most worthy to benefices, on account of distributive justice, is enforced by every law and every doctor: 'Omnia jura clamant ut meliores et sanctiores eligantur; et ideo peccant contra

justitiam distributivam, qui omisso digniori eligunt dignum, ut notant omnes in cap. constit. 10 de Appell.' This is confirmed not only by authors of rigid opinions, but also by the probabilists' opinion, such as Lugo and Father Viva, (in Prop. 47. Num. 9.) who coincide in the commonly received opinion.

"The other end of the institution of benefices refers to the utility of the Church, and is in order that she may obtain better ministers for her service by this means; and the best contribute the most to the welfare of a diocese, as St. Thomas explains, 22 q. 63. art. 2. in corp. where he says, 'Dispensationes spiritualium, (such as benefices,) principalius ordinantur ad utilitatem communem;' and further on, art. 2, ad 3, he adds, that although the election of the less worthy be valid in regard to external jurisdiction, yet that the elector ought in conscience to prefer the one most advantageous for the public good. 'Sed quantum ad conscientiam eligentis, necesse est (he even says it is a grave obligation,) eligere meliorem, vel simpliciter, vel in comparatione ad bonum commune.' This opinion of St. Thomas is common to all the other authors. See what Covarruvias writes in Van. Espen, volume 3, sect. 3. tit. 12. cap. 2. n. 3: 'Communi omnium consensu extat annotatum in cap. constitut. 10 de Appellat. quod prœlatus teneatur beneficio præficere digniorem.' And Father Dominic Viva, an author of rather probabilistic views, says, (in prop. 47, damn. ab. Innoc. XI.) that the bishop who prefers the

less worthy, even to simple benefices, is bound to make up for the injury which such an election has occasioned to the community.

"Having established the fact, that benefices are instituted by the Church for the common good of the whole diocese, it follows that the bishop ought to consider the benefit of the whole diocese before that of the town where the cathedral is. We have said also that subjects who will be of most use to the diocese ought to be chosen in preference to those who are the most learned; but experience proves that the most learned are generally the most useful, and this especially applies to the election of prebendaries of cathedrals, who are the bishop's counsellors.

"In former times the prebendaries composed the senate of the diocese, as Selvaggi says in his Canonical Institutions: 'Quarum consilio ecclesiastica negotia tractarentur,' on which Alexander III. has written, (cap. De his quæ fiunt. ab episc.) 'Novit plenius tuæ discretionis prudentia, qualiter tu et fratres tui unum corpus sitis, ita quod tu caput, et illi membra esse probentur.' It is true that this is not observed as rigorously now-a-days as it was formerly, but it cannot be denied that the canons are as the arms of the bishop; it is from amongst them that he must frequently choose his examiners, it is in concert with them that he makes the constitutions: Trident. Sess. 25, de Reform. cap. 10. It is with the canons that he holds synods; it is the canons whom he employs in the visitation of his diocese; it is by their vote that he

decides the most important affairs of government. Trid. Sess. 25, de Reform. cap. 6. Finally, at the death or the resignation of a bishop, it is the canons who ought to choose the vicar capitular. And this is expressed by the Council, Sess. 22. cap 2. de Reform. where it is ordained that in general, 'Quicumque posthac ad ecclesias cathedrales erit assumendus, is non solum natalibus, ætate, vita, moribus sit preditus..... scientia vero præter hæc ejusmodi polleat, ut muneris sibi injungendi necessitati possit satisfacere; ideoque antea in universitate studiorum magister, sive doctor, aut licentiatus in sacra theologia, vel jure canonico merito sit promotus, aut publico alicujus academiæ testimonio idoneus ad alios docendos ostendatur.' Such being the case, if the citizens of a cathedral town ought always to have the preference, even over more worthy diocesans, a common injury will result to the whole diocese; I say a common and a double injury, for the diocesans will take less pains in advancing in their studies, knowing that the citizens will always be preferred to them; and the citizens will take equally little pains in becoming more meritorious, knowing that they will always gain the preference over the diocesans of even greater merit; and thus, as the citizens would always be preferred before even the more worthy diocesans, the chapters will be filled with ignorant men, and the bishops must have recourse to strangers to procure advice, and to obtain greater benefit for their Church. I have thus represented what I could

touching this matter, conformably to your Majesty's orders, and for the relief of my conscience; I now have only to prostrate myself at your royal throne in expectation of your decision. I return the petition of the citizens of St. Agatha with this letter, as your Majesty commanded, and with the deepest respect, &c., &c."

The king's mind was quite satisfied by these wise reflections; and the Marquis of Marco wrote him a confidential letter, besides the official one, in which he approved of the bishop's prudent conduct, and in which he told him to bestow the benefices with all freedom and as he judged right before God.

But let us now turn to the final issue of the evil proceedings of the notary, and we shall see that Alphonso knew how to take a saintly revenge. His adversary, who wished to deprive him of his see, so to speak, took it into his head to try to reject or overturn ecclesiastical discipline. In his petition to the king, he asked that the canons and chaplains should be no longer elected by the bishop of the collegiate, but by the people in a public assembly. Alphonso saw through this scheme, which indeed the notary's own words sufficiently discovered, and in order to guard against the effects, he explained them to the king in anticipation, and spoke of the scandal which would result from these ecclesiastical elections being made in the midst of a tumultuous crowd of people. "The nomination of the least worthy, or perhaps of

totally unworthy subjects would be," said he, "the cause of a thousand quarrels, and a thousand enmities between the different parties concerned." After having made these representations, he concluded by saying, "The inconveniences which will be the result of this plan, and above all, the apprehension of so many consequent sins, cause me to inform your Majesty of all this. If you view it otherwise, I entreat you to prevent such fatal consequences." When the notary heard of this step on his Lordship's part, who enjoyed such great favour with the king, he and those belonging to him hastened to withdraw so extravagant a proposition for ever.

After these attempts on the part of the notary and his ecclesiastical brothers, they were quite disgraced in the estimation of the grand-vicar, and of the other members of his Lordship's household; but not at all so in that of Alphonso. A prebend happened to become vacant at the Church of Arienzo some time afterwards. While his Lordship was as usual listening to spiritual reading, that part of the Life of d'Tunico Caracciolo, cardinal and bishop of Averso, was read to him, wherein it is said that he revenged himself of a great offence on the part of a priest by conferring a large benefice on him: at these words he said to the reader, "Stop, and repeat what you have just read over again." When this was done, he sent for the grand-vicar. "I have resolved," said he, "to give consolation to the notary:" he then ordered him to make out the advowson of the pre-

bend in favour of his younger brother. "I will not oppose the holy resolution you have taken," replied the vicar, "but as the king has not yet declared that he is satisfied with you since the last appeal, may it not be said to your disadvantage, that you have been intimidated?" "Oh, indeed!" replied his Lordship. "Are we then obliged to attend to all that is said? Let them think and speak what they please; what concerns me is the notary's soul, and not my own glory." And not being able to endure any delay, he immediately sent for the notary, and said to him, as if he had been his intimate friend, "Send for your young brother from Naples; I intend to make him a prebendary." And he did as he had said. The appointment to this preferment caused him to meet with general disapprobation, and it was said, that in order to enter into Bishop de Liguori's good graces, it was necessary to obtain merit in his sight by loading him with injuries and ill-treatment.

Let us quote another, and a no less admirable trait, in concluding this chapter. In the examination for the situation of theologian, the incumbent of St. Angelus de Mungulariis and the priest Don Dominic de Cæsar were both candidates. The former had the advantage, but as he was young, and the priest Don Cæsar was older, and had much in his favour besides, having been confessor and professor at the seminary, Alphonso gave him the preference. His rival thought himself injured, and complained of it even to his Lordship himself; and then, with Alphonso's

Morals in his hand, he told him that he had acted with injustice and partiality, which caused him to be in a state of sin. Alphonso did all he could to pacify him; he sent for his father, justified his conduct towards his son, and promised to befriend him on the first opportunity; but the young priest only listened to his own anger; he vented it in outrages and calumnies, and then abandoned his parish. Alphonso bore it all; only, while deploring this man's obstinacy, he felt obliged to replace him by a curate. A prebend became vacant some time after this, Alphonso forgetting all the past, made no difficulty in conferring the dignity on the disappointed candidate. "If I do not make him a canon," said he, "he will never re-enter his parish; by my nominating him, on the contrary, he will be appeased, and we shall not have to give his parish to another."

His Lordship refused the possession of a benefice to a priest on another occasion; he could not grant it to him in conscience, being certain that this priest had paid a certain sum of money to a poor person who had the right of nomination to it, in order that he might confer it on him. A secular, who was the priest's brother, took his part, and went to his Lordship in order to load him with insults and curses; not satisfied with that, he had recourse to the king, and drew up fifteen heads of accusation against his Lordship, the whole of which was full of falsehood and calumny. A friend of Alphonso's showed him a copy of this statement,

Alphonso was mortified at it, and named it in confidence to the Dominican Father Caputo. "I do not understand why he has made this appeal," said he, "it is all false, as you see." "How many appellants are there?" asked Father Caputo. "One," replied his Lordship. "One! I am astonished at that," answered the Dominican Father, "there should be a hundred occupied daily in appealing against you. Do you not see that your goodness authorizes all these insolent people? you treat them all with cordiality, and they all abuse your kindness." This accusation, however, was not sent to Naples, as the slanderer thought it best to drop the matter. The person who had the right of election in regard to this benefice soon discovered the priest's dishonesty, and gave the preference to another.

In the report which I received of this occurrence from Father Caputo, he wrote still more minute details of what he had observed in his Lordship during this affair. "I blamed," said he, "the whole of his Lordship's conduct in this respect; for seeing how often his goodness was abused, I maintained that it was necessary to address just representations against these insolent people's conduct to the king, as a warning to others. 'You know God's law,' said he, in answer. 'It is true,' said I, 'that God commands us to do good to those who do us evil, but God equally orders subjects to respect their superiors; and to leave the wicked unpunished, is to sanction their boldness in evil.'— 'Do not let us say any more about all that,'

he then said, 'but let us come to the present case. If this accusation is sent to me, I must justify myself, by saying that it is all false.' He then began to reflect; and in a very agitated manner, on seeing how hard it was for him to get out of the difficulty, he opened his heart to me and said, 'Listen to me. I have always endeavoured to choose that which is the most perfect, and that is what I wish still to do.' 'My Lord,' I replied, 'if it merely related to Don Alphonso de Liguori as a private individual, I should not venture to decide whether you could or could not renounce your reputation; for under such circumstances you would be the only judge and arbiter of the course to be adopted, and I should respect your feelings on the subject. But as a bishop you are obliged to justify yourself; you are bound in justice to maintain your character in this dignity which is appointed for you by Jesus Christ.' He did not contradict me, and he hesitated, but he did not seem to be convinced. I know that others had also given him the same advice; but he thought that it was more perfect to be patient under a personal attack, and to remain silent, than to justify himself. I had always noticed his determination to embrace whatever was the most perfect, although I was not before aware that he had vowed to do so."

Archdeacon Rainone confirms the same thing, in the following brief terms in a letter which he wrote to me. He said, "His Lordship is not so much distressed at the number of the calum-

nies which are addressed to the king against him, as at being constrained to justify himself, and to manifest his innocence."—Alphonso's rule of conduct, or rather his principle in avenging the injuries of his enemies, was to excuse their perfidy through pity for their impotence, and to do them as much good as they had vainly sought to do him evil.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Alphonso's zeal in labouring for the good of the ministers of the altar also led him to attempt to sanctify the religious, who he considered to be equally consecrated to God. He wished that the ancient monastic regularity should be revived in all the convents, and he tried at least to renew their piety, and to prevent their falling into still further decay. "If we succeed in that," said he, "it will not be a trifling thing." Thus, nothing that could destroy prevalent abuses, and prevent others from being introduced, could escape his watchful vigilance.

He sent for Father Villani and some other missionaries from Naples at the time of his arrival in the diocese, to give the spiritual exercises to all the monasteries, and he caused this to be repeated at least once every year, either by our Fathers or by others who might come to preach the mission; failing whom, he

employed the Capuchin Fathers, Samuel and Cyprian, or other praise-worthy religious. The spiritual exercises were in his eyes the best method, or rather the only method for sanctifying souls. "A retreat is a fire," said he, "in which the most rusty iron ought to become softened and purified." When he was at Arienzo, he received and entertained the preacher in his palace, in order not to cause expense to the communities. The monasteries had either not had the spiritual exercises before his time, or had had them very rarely. Alphonso made use of them and with the greatest success for cutting down and uprooting the weeds which endeavoured to grow up among these precious plants, and the ornament of the gardens of the Church.

He often seized opportunities of going to visit one or other of these convents in person, and spent two or three days in preaching at the grate on religious duties; he placed himself beside a figure of the Blessed Virgin, and excited the religious to a great love of Jesus Christ and a special trust in His Divine Mother. He particularly advised them to practise frequent communion, showing how much good is derived from it. "This divine Sacrament," he said, "is a fire which consumes all our earthly affections." He by this means caused them to love prayer and mortification, and led them in the paths of the sublimest perfection.

He spoke very forcibly on certain matters one day at Arienzo; after the sermon, he was told that the religious complained of his having gone

too far; his Lordship smiled, and replied, "What then ought I to have said to them? that they were saints? When one preaches, one speaks in general, and one ought to suppose things which yet perhaps may not exist." He considered nuns as the most precious portion of his flock; following the example of the good Shepherd, he neglected no method of saving them from ravaging wolves. Open grates were to him as so many thorns which pierced his heart. "A shut grate," said he, "and a sanctified monastery; an open grate and a relaxed convent." He enjoined the abbesses, and still more the confessors, to watch over this point. He wished to be informed of all disorders, however small they might be, in order to be able to remedy them immediately; relations within the second degree alone had access to the parlour. He was particularly careful to keep ecclesiastics away, and above all, religious. "Almost everything that is necessary for nuns is done," said he, "if we succeed in saving them from the grate."

His vigilance and pains in preventing any one from frequenting the convents extended to those belonging to himself in particular. He considered it a great fault for any one, under any pretext, to violate his rule in this respect; the grand-vicar alone was excepted. He was informed that a secretary whom he had at the time was in the habit of going to convents secretly; Alphonso reprimanded him, and as he did not amend, he sent him away for this reason only, although he was dear to him, and

nearly indispensable. Bishop Borgia procured him another; but he also was in the habit of going to a convent secretly from time to time. Alphonso dismissed him as soon as he heard of it; the secretary threw himself at his feet, wept, and made many promises for the future, but all was in vain: he got the physicians Don Salvadore de Manro, and Nicholas Ferraro, to intercede in his favour, but they both obtained nothing but a refusal. The religious themselves addressed a petition in his favour; in the bishop's eyes this was a serious offence. "If the law is not observed by my own household, who then will observe it?"

Alphonso agreed to the request of a gentleman at Naples, who was devoted to him, who begged him to receive one of his sons into his house, in order to shelter him thereby most surely from the dangers of the world. As the young man was industrious and well conducted, Alphonso loved him and was rejoiced; but while his Lordship was at Arienzo, he took it into his head to frequent a convent, and he did not give it up or pay attention to the warnings which he received on the subject. When Alphonso became aware of it, he caused him, notwithstanding the young man's protestations and his own esteem for his father, to enter a carriage immediately, and to return to Naples; it was in the month of July, and at ten o'clock in the evening.

Alphonso was very prudent in his choice of confessors for the convents; if Bishop Liguori

had been Pope, he would have felt less embarrassment in nominating a bishop, than he experienced in fixing on a priest or a religious as an ordinary confessor for nuns. No examination was enough to satisfy him; he weighed the gestures, the words, and searched into even the opinions of the subject. He nominated another after three years, and if a lack of confessors compelled him to confirm the same, he only did so in trembling; on the contrary, when he was able to replace him, all the entreaties of the nuns could not prevail on him to confirm the former one. Frequent conversation with the religious at the grate was a sacrilege in his sight. "God speaks in the confessional," said he, "but not at the grate." He allowed the confessor to receive some token of gratitude on certain days of solemnity; but he did not suffer him to receive frequent presents, and they were always obliged to be given by the whole community. He was delighted to hear of any young pensioner who wished to consecrate herself to Jesus Christ. He hastened to assist at the ceremony, and left every other occupation for the purpose. He liked to preach at it, and, while he gave a high eulogium on holy virginity, he also showed forth the strict account which a religious who does not correspond to the engagements of her vows will have to render to Almighty God, without any respect of persons. He also accepted every invitation for the profession of even a lay sister; they were all spouses of Jesus Christ in his eyes. He never required the least recompense on these occasions, or premitted any

attention of the sort to be paid to him. "A bishop," said he, "ought to have no other recompense than is necessary to enable him to fulfil the obligations of his ministry." He was invited to the clothing of two sisters of Don John Manco, who was a priest and gentleman of Airola; he replied that he accepted the invitation, both through love and also to perform his duty. "As a bishop," said he, "it is my privilege and it is my duty to consecrate these victims of charity to God."

In order to give a fresh spur to the fervour of these Christian virgins, he introduced some exercises of piety into their churches, which were calculated to lead them to love Jesus Christ. In the convent of the Annunziata at Arienzo, he established, as we have already seen, a benediction, together with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, and a sermon in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary. When he was absent, he caused one of the two Capuchin fathers, Samuel or Cyprian, to preach in his stead. He did the same thing in the monastery of St. Philip, during all the Sundays in Lent.

In order to give the religious every advantage possible, he sent an extraordinary confessor to them every three months, without their asking for one, and when he was at Arienzo, and this confessor had to come from some other place, he took pleasure in receiving him at his table. He thought that a new confessor ought always to be granted to a religious when she asks for it. "When a religious asks

for an extraordinary confessor," said he, "it is a sign that she has not confidence in the ordinary one, and if she has some sin on her conscience, she may be led to commit a thousand sacrileges if her request is refused." He was extremely uneasy at hearing that a bishop was very cautious on this point, and that in one convent the religious had neglected confession for a considerable time. He attested himself that once in a convent a dying nun begged to have another confessor, and the bishop persisted in refusing it. In her dying moments she exclaimed, "I die in a state of damnation!" and she did in fact die in despair. He heard that the nuns of another convent could only write to their ordinary confessor, through a regulation on the subject. He immediately sent for the superior, and desired that this rule should be relaxed whenever any of them wished to apply to any confessor of well-known probity.

He endeavoured to re-establish monastic discipline everywhere. In the convent of the Franciscans at Airola, the circumstances of the times and the severity of the rules prevented several points from being observed. "What is the use of preserving written rules of one sort, if one practises another?" said Alphonso. He reformed the rule and caused it to be printed. "He curtailed all that was too rigorous," Sister Mary Felicita Lucca wrote to me, "God's servant has reformed it to our advantage, for that which he has regulated is now fully observed." Alphonso acted like another St. Francis of Sales

in the reforms which he made in this rule. We must especially admire the rare wisdom with which he knew how to condescend to every want, and yet to avoid too great indulgence. The religious were in the habit of reciting Matins and Lauds every morning, after which they had an hour's meditation. His Lordship thought that such prolonged application must necessarily cause weariness, and that the lay-sisters, who were obliged to attend to various manual labours at that very time, were deprived of the benefit of this meditation; he therefore resolved to postpone the recitation of the office until the evening, in order that all the religious, whether choir or lay, might assist at the mental prayer of the community. This change displeased several of them, who were of a different opinion. Alphonso, in order not to annoy them, allowed them only to recite the office in this manner from the 4th of October to the month of April inclusively. "I do as you wish," he said to them, "but you will change your opinions," and indeed they were not long of acknowledging their error. These Franciscan nuns groaned under a yoke which oppressed both their minds and bodies. The administration of the rents and the purchase of provisions was transacted by strangers who were forced upon them; these persons ought to have provided them with all they required, but the provisions were so wretchedly bad, that the poor nuns suffered great hardships. When Alphonso had become sure of the existence of these discomforts, which were so

great that some of the nuns repented of having entered into religion, he implored the protection of the Prince de la Riccia, deprived the stewards of the charge of the administration of the convent money, and placed it in the hand of the abbess. The nuns were filled with joy at this relief, but Alphonso was still more comforted in seeing them so satisfied.

He also wished to establish living in community in some of the convents at least. He thought that the attempt might be made in the one of which we have been speaking; the attempt was a difficult one. As soon as he had informed the nuns of his project, they all united against it; as he saw that more harm than good would result from it, he said, "Calm yourselves, I purposed it for your good, but as you judge otherwise, forget all I have said about it." He had a maxim, that when religious are not all agreed, the discontent of even one will give birth to a party, and with that to disorders, and the final ruin of the convent; so far from being offended at the opposition of these religious, he paid them quite a paternal visitation on the following day.

While he endeavoured to ameliorate the state of the convents, he also tried to extirpate their abuses. It was a custom among the Franciscans of Airola, that when a young person was clothed or professed, she should remain seated at the door during the rest of the day, that she might receive the congratulations of her relations and of her friends. Alphonso reflected on the dissipation of mind which this must cause to the

new nun, as well as to the rest, and as he wished that this day of thanksgiving should be spent in recollection, he ordered that neither the door nor the grate should be opened after dinner, but that exposition of the Blessed Sacrament should take place in the Church at that time, in order that all the religious should be kept in retirement, and that the new spouse of Jesus Christ might then be able to strive in a special manner to obtain abundant blessings.

Another abuse existed in this convent, and not less than the former. When a young person took the vows or the habit, she was invited to dine in the parlour with her relations and friends, and it was all arranged like any worldly entertainment. They wished to have a repast on the day when the two daughters of Catherine de Lucca, (a noble lady of St. Agatha,) made their religious profession. As soon as Alphonso perceived the preparations for it he was indignant, and ordered them to be instantly put an end to. The lady Catherine and the abbess came to entreat him, but he would not yield; the noble lady's embarrassment was then represented to him, for she had invited relations and friends from various parts, and had no house in the neighbourhood in which she could receive them. Alphonso so far yielded to this consideration as to consent to the repast taking place in the convent; it was on condition that the grate and the door should remain shut, and that the keys should be placed in the hands of the abbess; this was the last time that a repast of this kind was given in the convent.

It is stated in the ritual of a convent in Arienzo, that the novice who takes the vows ought to pronounce the formula between the hands of the bishop. This was interpreted literally, and at the time of a profession it was the custom there to place the young person's hands in those of the bishop, as if the vows of the religious life were to be ratified by the physical contact of hands, rather than by the heart and the mouth. Alphonso was present at the profession of a novice; at the instant when she was about to utter the formula of the vows, the master of the ceremonies asked his Lordship to pass his hands through the grate. Alphonso did not understand this mystery, and was at a loss what to do; but as the canon insisted, and said that the novice ought to place her hands in his whilst uttering the vows, he exclaimed, "Oh, Jesus! Oh, Jesus! what has that to do with the profession? Let her keep her hands to herself, and I will keep mine!" He asked if this custom had always been practised, and the reply was, that it was a very ancient one, and that his predecessors had thus interpreted the words of the ritual; he then, in great astonishment at such a mistake, explained the meaning of the rubric, and for ever suppressed this strange ceremony.

Figured music, although forbidden to religious, by several decrees at Rome, was quite in fashion in a convent in the diocese of St. Agatha. Alphonso forbade its use in that convent as well as in the others, and prescribed the sole use of the Gregorian chant. "The church is

not a theatre," said he, "and religious are not opera singers." He forbade anthems on festivals with still greater severity, and wished that if they were ever anxious to sing something extra, it should never be a solo. He only permitted the lessons of Holy Week to be sung. These regulations were transgressed however. One evening when a nun was singing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin to figured music, his Lordship suddenly entered the church; the nun perceived him, and directly commenced to sing a Gregorian chant. Alphonso did not take any notice of it at first, but he then went to the grate and said, laughingly, "You wished to deceive me just now, and that was not right; I forbade it, because I did not think it proper. Light music is a decoy to young libertines, who do not hasten to it through devotion, but to hear the nun who sings, and who does not see that she is thus the cause of a number of irregularities and sins." Alphonso made two predictions in regard to singers. A young person asked to be received into this convent as a lay-sister. The religious granted her request, because the young woman was a good musician. They told his Lordship that they wished to have her to teach plain chant to the novices and young parishioners. "I grant your request," his Lordship replied, "but she will not persevere." And so it was: the new lay-sister left the convent some little time afterwards. The nuns also solicited him in favour of another, who understood music also. "This person will not persevere any better," said his

Lordship with a smile. The young novice returned home at the expiration of a few months. Upon this the religious began to reflect: "God evidently condemns our duplicity," said they; "since our plans are found out by his Lordship." So they made a firm resolution of never thinking of having anything but the Gregorian chant for the time to come.

In some convents the entrance of little children was permitted through an abuse, and sometimes even boys of a certain age. The Council of Trent strictly forbids it; Alphonso confirmed this prohibition, and he represented the great evils which it would entail on the superiors. The nuns of the Annunziata at Arienzo wished to admit a little boy called Alphonso, and a nephew of his Lordship's; he allowed them to see him, but only at the grate, and he cautioned the mother superioress to take care that his injunctions were obeyed.

However, everything did not always succeed as he would have wished. In one of his visits to a convent, he noticed the evil of two little windows of a belvedere which opened just opposite to a house belonging to seculars. The religious immediately saw what he meant, and without another word a general alarm arose. One of them lost sight of all respect, and went so far as to resist him openly, and say to him, "My Lord, we do not choose to put up with all this carefulness; we will take the cross, and go and demand justice from the king." At this unexpected insult, Alphonso feared something

worse happening, and so he hastened to pacify them. "Be tranquil," he said to them, "do not alarm yourselves; I do not wish to cause you any pain." He then changed the subject, and the conversation went on peaceably.

Alphonso took still more pains to prevent the introduction of new abuses than to reform the old ones. Catherine de Lucca had a bed-ridden daughter in a convent at Airola, and she had obtained leave from the Pope to visit her once a year, and to converse with her as much as she pleased from morning till night. His Lordship got the edict to examine it. Before sending it to Naples for the king's approval, he reflected on the clause which he had read of Arbitrio ordinarii, and on the possibility of other persons pretending to the same thing to the injury of the inclosure, he therefore replied to the messenger: "Tell Dame Catherine that I suspend the permission for the present, she may do what she likes if I die or resign;" and on being importuned on the subject, he answered, "I cannot do it, because I have a scruple about it; the Pope can grant it if he pleases, but as he has referred it to me, I cannot, and I will not, on account of the attendant inconveniences." The nuns of another convent intended to make new windows which would open on the street, and be furnished with blinds; they asked for permission from his Lordship, but he flatly refused it. Persons in authority interfered in their behalf; but as soon as Alphonso heard these solicitations he let the nuns know, that if they did not desist

from their project they would displease him very much, because he could not consent to an improper thing. The religious then took his advice and remained silent, and took no further steps in the affair. Some other nuns in a convent at Arienzo, wished to obtain purer air, and formed the plan of having a little belvedere above the front door of the church. They asked for his Lordship's sanction, who sent the grand-vicar to see if the thing were fitting or not; he caused him to be accompanied by the two architects from Naples, the stewards and the confessor belonging to the convent. When he heard that the belvedere would be opposite to the windows of the fathers of St. Austin, he hastened to reply in the negative. The religious themselves saw the imprudence of their project, and in order to show plainly that they were not in the least offended at this refusal, they subscribed a declaration in which they all certified their entire obedience to all the wishes of their bishop.

The Pope granted from time to time the cloistered nuns permission to absent themselves from the convent. Some in the diocese, without reflecting on the sad consequences which might result from it, were inclined to ask for a similar dispensation; as soon as Alphonso perceived it, he warned them to abstain from so doing. "The Pope refers it to the ordinary," he said, "and I will never consent to grant it; I know what a bad reputation these goings out have, and the very least evil which results from them is at least a very great dissipation of mind." Alphonso

had always an answer ready for all such thoughtless requests.

Some nuns complained that he never granted them anything, and that they had met with three refusals consecutively from him. "Let them ask me for things that are just and right," said Alphonso, "and I will take care not to refuse them; but whenever they address unreasonable requests to me, they must not expect to obtain anything."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE material temples were no less the objects of Alphonso's solicitude than the living temples; and as all that enhances the glory of God's house must be considered amongst the signs of perfect zeal, Alphonso also signalized himself in this respect after the example of king David.* When he entered into the diocese, he particularly aimed at increasing the magnificence of the churches, and he spared neither labour nor fatigue to attain this end.

The old church of St. Agnes, in one of the parishes of Arienzo, was so out of repair that it was nearly in ruins; the ceiling was broken and the walls were cracked in several places. Alphonso, on seeing this building in such a ruinous

* Domine dilexi decorem domus tuæ, et locum habitationis gloriæ tuæ. Ps. xxv. 8.

state, was very anxious to get the canons belonging to the chapter to remedy it; and they, not satisfied with a simple repair, sent for two celebrated architects from Naples, Don Peter and Don Salvadore Cimafonte, and ordered them to use all their skill in making a complete restoration of the church. A great portion of the outer walls, which were in a bad condition, were pulled down; and instead of a low and mean-looking building, an edifice of a noble elevation and with a beautiful roof was obtained; it was adorned with statues and other elegant ornaments, which made the church extremely beautiful; the bishop caused a solemn mission to be given in the parish at the time of its re-opening.

The parish church of St. Stephen at Arienzo was also in a deplorable state; this church formed part of the large living of St. Angelus de Palomba. The roof was injured in several places, so that the water came in on all sides, and it seemed on the point of falling. The bishop caused it to be examined by expert workmen, who said that the repairs would cost at least five hundred ducats. He had no means of supplying so great an expense; but as the incumbent had sold a felling of wood for three thousand three hundred ducats, Alphonso sequestered three hundred ducats to be applied to the first third of the payment; with that he repaired the roof, embellished the stucco of the high altar, restored the pavement with taste, and made a large window to remedy the damp. The principal church of St. Angelus was in as

bad a state as its chapel of ease. It presented the appearance of barracks, rather than that of a temple of God. As the incumbent cared more for his revenues than for the preservation of the church, the edifice, which was in a lonely country spot, would soon have fallen into entire ruin. Alphonso still endeavoured to repair it, in spite of the impertinent complaints of the incumbent. The restoration of these two churches was a work of time; but our saint made arrangements so that the labours should continue after his resignation of the episcopacy, and it is to his care that the good state in which they are now to be found is attributable.

At Ducento the church of the archpresbytery of St. Andrew the apostle had been in a state of abandonment and ruin for a number of years, through the avarice and carelessness of the incumbents; the neighbouring buildings, such as the archpriest's house, presented an equally unsatisfactory appearance. All this, added to the unhealthiness of the place, caused the rector of the church to be almost constantly absent. His Lordship was distressed at the sad state of these buildings, and above all, at the neglect in which the faithful of the parish were left; but he could find no method of remedying it. When the archpriest offered his resignation, Alphonso thought that he ought not to nominate another in his place; he accordingly appointed a priest to perform the duties, giving him fifty ducats a year, and reserved the rest of the income of the

living for the repairs of the buildings. He told Mgr., the nuncio, of the determination he had come to, and of the wants of this house of God: all was sanctioned, and the church was soon repaired, together with the buildings belonging to it. By this expedient he prevented the future archpriests from having any excuse for non-residence, and thus the faithful received for the future the care and assistance of their parish priests.

The very large and spacious parish church at Mojano was so neglected that it looked more like a barn than a house of prayer. It was said that there was no means of restoring it; but Alphonso, seconded by the worthy incumbent, Thomas Aceti, and aided by the generosity of the parishioners, made this church into a real basilica, worthy to rank with those which we admire in Naples or Rome; it is all adorned by figures in stucco of finished workmanship, all the altars, the baptistry, and the basements of the pillars are of marble, the choir is equally to be admired for its magnificence, all the paintings are masterpieces, and the other ornaments are in keeping with the richness of the altars; in a word, all in this temple speaks of devotion and splendour, and is the fruit of the generous piety of the incumbent and parishioners, added to the zeal and the solicitude of Bishop Liguori.

He did not take less pains in beautifying the cathedral, although it was in a very good state. This church is a superb one, thanks to the deceased Bishop Gaeta, for this excellent prelate,

on seeing that the ancient cathedral was quite out of repair, undertook to rebuild it entirely.*

Alphonso took the greatest care that it should always be kept in good repair. He saw that the roof was injured in several places; he immediately sent for experienced workmen, and it was put in order; he effected a great many other repairs of this kind without ever flinching from any expense. When he first came the church had not yet been consecrated; Mgr. Puoti, the Bishop of Amalfi, hastened thither at his voice, and the consecration took place in the year 1663. He spent about four hundred ducats in

* The present cathedral of St. Agatha may be compared to the early basilicas of Naples and of Rome. The plan of the church is very grand, it consists of three naves and several chapels, it is rich in marbles, and all the altars are well proportioned and in good keeping. The ornaments are remarkable, and all bear token of a master's hand; decorations abound in it, and all unite in rendering it majestic. The ancient church was no less beautiful; it also was built with three naves, of which the middle one was supported by twelve beautifully proportioned columns. There is every reason to believe, that the ancient temple of Saticola was a Pantheon like that at Rome, and that it was converted into a church by the faithful. In digging for the new foundations, a piece of marble was found with the following inscription:

"J. O. M. C. O. D. I."

That is to say, "Jovi optimo maximo, cæterisque omnibus Diis immortalibus."

Vestiges of the primitive temple and of its magnificence may even now be seen in the court which Bishop Gaeta left untouched, and which, as it now exists, still forms the greatest ornament of the cathedral. It has three large arches in front, and two at the sides; all five are supported by twelve columns, two of which are of oriental granite. Besides these, there are columns of the same granite which adorn the door of the present cathedral, but two others of green and antique granite, which were formerly there, have been taken into the villa of the Portici. The capitals of the columns are still ornamented by divers small columns, which clearly must have served, as at the Pantheon in Rome, for supports for a similar number of idols.

embellishing the cross pillars in marble, and the horns of plenty in brass.

But there is a still more remarkable instance of Alphonso's zeal for the house of God. The village of St. Mary de Vico contains more than three thousand souls, divided into two parishes, the two priests of which had to exercise their respective functions together in the same church, which was, moreover, incapable of holding more than three hundred persons. A thousand inconveniences resulted from this, and the offices were either ill done or else neglected altogether. The Fathers of the congregation of the Pious Workmen designed to give a mission there, and had not done so for want of a place to preach in. As soon as Alphonso came and saw such a sad state of things, he grieved over it, and immediately conceived the bold scheme of building a church there capable of holding all the inhabitants. The priests wanted to form two distinct parishes, but his Lordship feared that if too much were attempted nothing would be done, and so he decided that there should be only one established as formerly.

It was impossible not to see that the undertaking was a difficult one, but all was easy to Alphonso. He held several meetings in concert with the two parish priests, Don Matthew Migliore and Don Vincent de Mauro, and at the head of the clergy and gentlemen of the place, and he persuaded the two priests to give up the tithes for the benefit of the building, which might amount to three or four hundred ducats. A

hundred ducats remained for the maintenance of each, besides the surplice fees, which were also considerable. The priests and the committee for the building consented to everything, and the parishioners promised to contribute an annual sum of two hundred ducats towards it.

When everything was settled, there was still a disinclination to commence the work. Alphonso therefore sent for the two architects we have before spoken of from Naples, and asked them for a design for a beautiful and spacious church. The parish priests would have liked to have the whole of the sum needful for the building in hand before its commencement. "If you mean to act thus," said Alphonso to them, "you will never obtain the desired end; I wish the work to be commenced at once, if it is not, the church will never be finished." A committee of eight was formed, consisting of four laymen and four ecclesiastics, and the foundations were commenced. Alphonso went to the spot to look into it all himself; the circumference of the church appeared to him to be still too small to hold all the people during the time of a mission, so he ordered them to enlarge it. He was filled with unbounded joy on seeing this great work effected; he went in pontifical vestments preceded by his clergy to lay the first stone of the edifice, in the year 1763, with the usual prayers. The eagerness with which he was evidently filled, caused some one to say that his Lordship would willingly have celebrated the functions of the church in the building

before it was commenced. The generous prelate contributed no small sum towards the expenses; indeed, we may even say that he took the whole expense of the building on himself. He had only ten ducats at first, and yet he furnished money for a work which amounted to more than fifteen thousand ducats; his faith did the whole. The people, encouraged by his magnanimity, aided in the undertaking by spontaneous gifts; the two priests, rivaling his Lordship's confidence, gave signal proofs of their disinterestedness. They wrote to tell him that they would be satisfied with only retaining for their maintenance the sum requisite for the food and clothes of a mere servant. Alphonso was full of joy at seeing the progress of the work, and he never missed going to look after it when he was in Airola, or ceased to encourage the people by his presence and by his exhortations.

But troubles did not fail to mingle themselves in the work, for good things are always opposed. The people grew cold, and as the tithes had been prohibited, they applied to the royal council for permission to give up contributing to the expenses. Alphonso however was not at all discouraged; he related all that had happened to the president of the council, Don Balthazar Cito, his friend, and obtained leave for the tithes to be continued until the building was finished; after which other measures could be taken. He also managed to triumph over a thousand other obstacles, which only served to cause his courage and firmness to be still more admired.

"His Lordship has given ten ducats," said Don Matthew Migliore to me, "but his solicitude and the aid he has obtained have amounted to thousands." It was at his expense that the advocates and the attorneys went to Naples, and it was he also who was unceasingly engaged in corresponding with persons who were able to assist in the undertaking. What did he not do with the president of the council and the two councillors John Pallante and Salvadore Caruso, the latter of whom was commissioner of causes? and what did he not receive through their support? He entertained the two architects with their servants and horses at his palace at his own expense, and he obtained an abatement of four or five hundred ducats through their generosity; it was through this indefatigable energy that Alphonso conducted so great an undertaking to such a happy termination, and when he left the diocese there was nothing left to finish but some stuccoing and flagging.

Alphonso had at heart the interior embellishment of the churches, and the decency which becomes the houses of God, as well as what referred to the outward part of the buildings. He especially wished the altars to be furnished with suitable ornaments. "I have never seen a priest," said he, "make use of a dirty worn-out linen at table; everything they themselves use is clean, and it is only for Jesus Christ that dirty things are allowed." He would have done still more if the rectors and the revenues had corresponded to his wishes.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

God never granted peace or repose to Alphonso, but unceasingly exercised him in resignation and patience. Our congregation was in a very flourishing state, and Alphonso was full of a joy, in which we too participated, in seeing how the Lord was graciously pleased to shower down blessings upon us; but an enemy, or to speak more justly, hell, was irritated at the success of a work of God's, and could not allow it to go on tranquilly. A quarrel occurred three years back between those belonging to our house at Iliceto, and Francis Anthony Maffei, who was a man of great authority, which caused the greatest difficulties to that house, as well as to the whole congregation. Maffei got engaged in a dispute with the people about the fief of Iliceto, of which he was the lord, and they complained of him to the king, and stated several offences against him. The affair became more and more serious, and we, in order to avoid evil consequences, applied to the president, de Foggia Don Granito, through Bishop Basta of Melfi, and obtained an exemption from the necessity of appearing in this trial. Although the people had appealed to us to appear as witnesses against Maffei, and we refused to do so, not wishing to espouse either side, our neutrality offended this Lord. "He who is not for me is against me,"

said he. He would have liked our fathers to examine into his cause, and to testify in his favour; for this reason he got angry at our conduct, declared himself our enemy, and swore not only to extirpate the house at Iliceto, but all the congregation. He began by disputing our rights as citizens, and as the administrators of the law were under his control, he prevented our cutting wood in the public forest, though he could not well help our drawing water, and he also deprived us of several other advantages. Now this happened in winter; for lack of a fire, we were obliged to lay in bed till the day was far advanced, and we were forced to use even the church benches for cooking. Several ecclesiastics joined our adversary's side. Everything was of parochial right, and as such took away from our privileges. As soon as a person became ill, he was assiduously surrounded by those who thus prevented our being with him, and those who had formerly been consoled at obtaining the aid of the missionaries, who went every Sunday to catechise the people, now wanted us no more.

The excellent Prince Don Matthias Miroballa was prejudiced against us, and no longer protected us. Our fathers at Ciorani lived harmoniously with Baron Don Nicholas Sarnelli; he however felt a secret resentment against us, on account of some property which his brother had bequeathed to Alphonso, and which formed the only support of this poor house. It was the same in regard to other gifts which his brother had

personally bestowed. He more than once had brought forward his designs, but we had succeeded in pacifying him at our own expense, when an unintentional mistake on our part caused him again to rise up against us. It so happened that some mark of attention in church was omitted towards his wife, the baroness, and that was enough to cause the rupture; when one wishes to quarrel with a person, one is apt to enter into friendship with his enemies. Maffei seized on the opportunity of exciting the baron about his claims to attention, and he became very violent against us. The matter became serious, for they mutually excited each other; Maffei, that he might triumph in a point of honour, and the baron, that he might recover a thing which he pretended belonged to him.

After the flame was once kindled, Maffei was not ashamed of pursuing us, and accusing us in direct terms of crimes to the king, saying, that we, to the scandal of the public, had degenerated from what we were when the institute had been so much praised by his Catholic Majesty; that we no longer occupied ourselves with missions, but that, governed by a spirit of avarice, we endeavoured to make purchases, robbing the people for our own aggrandisement; that we had superb edifices, even for our country houses, which surpassed those of the Jesuits; that we had erected a church at Ciorani, which surpassed those of the first cities; and that, through a fatal abuse, we went into houses to excite the inhabitants to rebel against their

superiors; in a word, we were loaded with all the accusations which had before been brought against the Jesuits; and in several addresses to the king, we were represented as having caused the ruin of his people, and as likely to become formidable even to the crown. While they thus held the cards in their own hands, and thought that they had the best of the game, they already began to proclaim that the missionaries were destroyed and exiled, and that the congregation was suppressed. These calumnies having reached the throne, fresh accusations were made against us in the tribunal of Foggia, as well as at the royal courts of Lucere, Montefusco, and Salerno. The ministers' offices were daily besieged by letters and claims, and there was not a court of justice in Naples which did not receive some petition against us. All the congregation were in a state of sorrow and affliction. The truth only reached the king's ears by slow degrees, and adulterated by falsehood.

However, the baron represented that the ground belonging to our house, and the buildings situated thereon, had been invalidly given to us by his father; and that the gift made to us by his brother was still more invalid, for that, as he had died ab intestat, he himself had inherited his possessions, and that in justice the house ought to be restored to him, together with the vineyard and the fruits, which had been unfairly gathered. He even went so far as to say that the rapacity of the missionaries either passed all bounds, or else had recourse to sub-

terfuges and equivocation, in order to enable them to make immense acquisitions, to the detriment both of the public and the crown.

Every one can see what grief all this opposition must have caused to Alphonso. When I told him of all the extraordinary calumnies with which we were loaded, he groaned over them, and humbling himself before God, he adored His righteous judgments. He was most moved at Maffei's animosity: "The matter is more serious than you imagine," he said to me. "If Don Maffei is offended, I grieve for the poor house! I know his disposition, and what he caused the venerable Mgr. Lucci to suffer. May God deign to be our Protector!" He said, in writing to Father Villani, "Cause a Salve Regina to the Blessed Virgin to be recited after morning and night prayers, with the prayer, Defende, for the house at Iliceto, which is in great danger." The troubles did not cease, so he ordered prayers and fasts in all the houses. He wished that the Psalm, Qui habitat, should be recited in common every evening, and ordered a novena in honour of the Blessed Virgin, with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. He recommended discretion and charity to be exercised towards our adversaries, and above all, that nothing should be undertaken against them, even in self-defence, and that recourse should be made to no other arms than those of prayer and observance of rule. He further wished that an Ave to the Blessed Virgin should be repeated after the examination in common in the even-

ing, in order to entreat her to enlighten our persecutors, and restore our tranquillity.

This distressing affair gave sorrow to all our friends, and especially to the Marquis of Marco, who at that time was the minister of justice and worship. He knew perfectly well what sad annoyances the venerable Bishop, Anthony Lucci, had suffered at Bovino from the same lord of Iliceto; so when Canon Malizia informed him of our embarrassment, the marquis exclaimed, "He is not satisfied with having tormented one of God's servants, he wishes to distress this one also." The marquis was affected at seeing us exposed to the hatred of such powerful persecutors, so he took an interest in our cause, and wished to aid us by his protection.

The flame gained ground daily; Alphonso therefore wrote the following circular to the members of his congregation: "Behold, my dear brothers, how the Lord has visited us in sending us so many tribulations; we are in alarm on account of the efforts of our enemies, who labour to destroy the congregation, and we know not what may be the end thereof. It is our negligence in observing the rule which God now chastises. Let us hope in the mercy of Almighty God, who will not permit the congregation to be destroyed; let us now try to appease His anger by our prayers and by avoiding all voluntary transgressions, especially that of disobedience, because in this respect there is no punishment which we have not merited. Observe, that the congregation has been afflicted

ever since the Saturday fast has been omitted; let us then now endeavour to deserve the protection of the Blessed Mary amid the storm wherein we find ourselves, by restoring this fast-day in all the houses. Thus the divine mother will exert her power, and will save us from the total ruin with which we are menaced by our enemies."

Maffei wished that we should be deprived of the privilege of possessing the rights of citizens by a sentence of the supreme court, although he had already robbed us of them as far as practice went. We were obliged to appear before the royal council of Sommaria, to which the king had referred the decisions to be given in regard to pretended claims. Five advocates undertook the cause of Maffei, threatening to destroy and ravage all belonging to us; we on our side had only Don Gaetan Celano, who was a famous advocate at that time, and afterwards became the king's councillor. As he felt convinced of our innocence and of the justice of our cause, he did not hesitate to defend us. Our possessions were confirmed to us after an investigation, to the confusion of our adversaries; they consisted of five bee-hives, a gun, a basin, and some hundreds of young vines, which a countryman left to be sold, and their profit to be used by the clergy to meet the expenses of a funeral, and to provide for the celebration of a certain number of masses which had been promised. The royal council were greatly surprised at seeing such grievances; and on finding that the demand

for depriving us of civil rights had been dictated by a malicious spirit, they decreed unanimously, on January 1st, 1767, that the members of the Congregation should enjoy the same privileges as the other subjects belonging to the kingdom. The councillors were delighted at having to give such a decision, never having had to examine into any cause which had given them such great satisfaction.

Far from being ashamed at this disappointment, our persecutors only redoubled their hatred against us. Maffei had recourse to intrigue, and obtained access to the royal council. The procurator allowed himself to be prejudiced, and forbade us to administer our property. The register of this court went to la Pouille, accompanied by a strong detachment of constables. Our enemies did not even spare our money, in order to render our ruin more complete, and the little that we possessed was entrusted to a strange commissioner, named by Maffei; this was a most heavy blow to us, for we had hardly even a few carlines remaining. Alphonso's sorrow on hearing these tidings, and on seeing his poor children without bread, can be well imagined. "Let us not cease to pray," he wrote to them, "because all my hope is in God;" and he said to Father Villani, "Let us behave well, and Jesus Christ will protect us; He does not cease to give us warnings, but if we prove unfaithful, He will abandon us."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Calumny has the peculiarity of having recourse to new falsehoods, instead of retiring into obscurity after having been convicted of imposture. Thus our adversaries, in order to maintain the semblance of truth in their assertions as to our acquisitions, searched through all the records of the notaries in the provinces where we had had the most business, in order to find out, if possible, all the legacies and donations which had been given to us. They had spoken of the magnificence of our houses, and of the excessive expenses which we had incurred; they therefore ordered some wretched masons to come and put a valuation on our houses, as if they had been so many architects, and after a simple glance at the exterior, our houses were estimated some at sixty, and others at twenty-four thousand ducats. These new appraisers attested all they said on oath, and their falsehoods were reported to the king, under the guise of truth.

In order to relieve the misery in which we were plunged, we thought it right to send the lay-brothers to beg for a little corn during harvest time; but in order to cut us off from all means of subsistence, it was represented to the king that we went about begging without his permission, and in support of this accusation a

commissioner was sent through the provinces to verify the truth of these serious offences; the monasteries of the mendicant orders were also excited to protest against the missionaries. A few yielded to the instigations of our persecutors, it is true, but the greater part of the religious repelled them with indignation.

We were also accused of having committed a grievous offence in regard to our foundation in the state of Benevento. The king was told that it had been attempted contrary to his majesty's wishes, as he had only allowed us to have four houses. The gold and silver of the kingdom, which had been amassed together in so many ingots, so to speak, was deposited in the house at Benevento by the missionaries, they said, who thus succeeded in eluding the royal ordinances about acquisitions. Searches were also made to confirm the pretended legacies and donations said to have been made to this house.

But this was not all, an odious attempt nearly completed our ruin. When we saw that the little that we had at Iliceto was at the mercy of the so-called commissioners, we found means to consign some property which still remained to us into the hands of a person who was devoted to our interests; Maffei profited by this as if it had been a capital crime. We had also ploughed on some land which served as the boundary to the royal hunting ground; in his office of keeper of this ground, he accused the missionaries of having had the boldness to take away the boundaries of the royal domain, and

of having cut the wood on it, and turned a portion of it into tillage land. The husbandman was immediately seized by a royal command, and the President of Foggia, Don Angelus Granito, went to the spot in order to verify the pretended crime in person; he immediately saw the true state of the case, and he arranged and expedited his report; but the king did not perceive this calumny for a year afterwards.

Our misfortunes did not end here. The king was going to make a hunting party at Tremoleto, in the same territory of Iliceto; Maffei went to Caserto, and told him that the missionaries had prejudiced the people's minds against his majesty, and that the inhabitants intended to rise in a body, and to go and meet him, which would place him in great danger. What put the idea of recurring to this imposture into Maffei's head was, that he knew how much the people hated him, and he really feared that they might rise up in revolt, and make complaints to the king against himself. His stratagem succeeded, for he by this means prevented the people from doing anything against him. Two couriers were immediately despatched to Foggia, and when the king arrived at Torre Guevara, a third was sent to the president, to get his orders and enable him to make his report. Our suppression began to be spoken of as well as the chastisements which awaited us. But when serious inquiries were set on foot, the slanders against us were made manifest, and so far from any one alleging anything to our disadvantage,

they on the contrary protested against our oppressor.

The same miserable attempts were resorted to at the same time in order to ruin the missionaries at Ciorani. Their conduct was misrepresented; they endeavoured to find them guilty of offences against the sovereign and the state; they pretended to prove that they led a scandalous life and oppressed the people. All these rumours were spread about, and each of us became the laughing-stock of free-thinkers, especially at Naples. We had daily visits from the constables and other inferior officers. The work of the missions suffered very much from these interruptions, to our great sorrow and that of all good people.

During this combination of unjust accusations one single thing remained untouched—it was the purity of the missionaries. The father-guardian of a monastery at Iliceto dared to attack it however. While he went about into different houses and tried to blacken our reputation in the eyes of the people, in order thereby to obtain favour with Maffei, he everywhere published that we had also become guilty in this point in the wood of Iliceto. But God was too much incensed at such daring audacity, and therefore was not slow in punishing him for it. The accuser was found guilty of the crime of which he had accused others; divers complaints were laid against him before the episcopal court, on account of several improper solicitations which he had made in the confessional and elsewhere. His trial was pre-

pared, for Mgr. Pacelli deprived him of his faculties for hearing confessions, and the superiors of his order commanded him to be arrested for still further offences, which was done in the public square at Foggia, whither he had gone.

Such sad events could not fail to grieve Alphonso, notwithstanding all his constancy. In order that we might merit the Divine mercy he was continually urging us to penance, and redoubling his own mortifications. He solicited the prayers of several monasteries and holy persons at Naples. He also sent a great quantity of wax candles to the hermitages of the Camaldules Fathers, in order that they might expose the Blessed Sacrament and then intercede for the congregation with God. He repeatedly sent large alms to the Capuchin nuns at Naples, and got them to make novenas and other pious exercises.

In consequence of this state of things, we asked him to go to Naples, as the king had entrusted the whole of the proceedings to the court of justice of St. Clare, and we especially feared as to the result of the accusations against the house at Benevento. Alphonso was ill of a tertian fever at the time, but he wrote to Father Villani on the 7th of July, 1767, saying, "I have not gone to Naples, but I have written to the president, Don Cito, in a way that will be very efficacious. If he does not protect me after that letter, a hundred visits would be equally useless. I am prevented from going out by fever, which is constantly attacking me; the doctors say that the least chill or excessive motion

might occasion a relapse, and if I am not cured while summer lasts, there is no chance of being so for the whole winter." His only affliction was in seeing us in suffering. He wrote again to the same Father Villani, on the 18th of the same month, when he said, "It is good for us to abandon ourselves entirely into the hands of God with perfect resignation ; I cannot however understand why you are so afraid, for our houses in the kingdom are established by the decrees of his Catholic Majesty. Maffei's accusations are known to be powerless, for Benevento is now under the king's authority, with whom envy has no influence." Alphonso was filled with confidence and security when the tempest was at its height, and in spite of the peril to which our little bark was exposed, he slept, or rather he reposed on the goodness of God, the innocence of his sons, and the king's good dispositions.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

In this same year 1767, while the congregation was thus persecuted, Alphonso published his great work for the defence of the Catholic Church, called, "The Truths of the Faith ;" he therein shows that it is one of divine institution, and that out of this Church there is no salvation.

This work is divided into three parts: the first

is directed against the materialists, who deny the existence of God; in the second, he attacks the deists, who deny a revealed religion; in the third, the sectaries, who deny the Catholic Church to be the only true one. He attacks at the same time the Jansenists, those other enemies of the Church and the blood of Jesus Christ. When he wrote to Brother Francis Tartaglione, to speak about the printing of this work, he said to him, "These manuscripts have cost me more than I can say."

Whilst the work was in the press, he added two appendices; the first was against Helvetius, or rather against his book entitled "The Spirit." He took especial pains to refute it in two points: first, as to regard to physical sensibility, which Helvetius calls the producing cause of our thoughts; Alphonso shows that if this definition be adopted, there is no longer any difference between the soul of a man, and the instinct of brutes, and that such a principle destroys morality and religion. He combats in the second place Helvetius's other proposition, viz., that pleasure and interest form the morality of man, that is to say, that all which increases pleasure is honest, and all which favours interest is just. Alphonso proves that the reality of true good and of real evil ought to be man's sole principle for action. He equally opposes other impieties against religion, liberty, and Christian morals.

The aim of the second part of the book is to refute a French work entitled, "De la Predication," &c. in which the author attacks evangelical

preaching openly, and establishes a distinction between conversion of the mind and that of the heart, and maintains that the first and not the second is effected through preaching. Alphonso demonstrates the impiety of this assertion, and proves that without preaching man would be deprived of one of the most efficacious methods established by God for his conversion.

This work was received with universal applause, and the zeal with which Alphonso had composed it obtained for him the greatest praise. John Baptist Gori, canon of the cathedral of Naples, said in a report which he sent to his Eminence Cardinal Sersale, in admiration of Alphonso's zeal: "Nothing can hinder* or slacken the zeal of this apostolic man; in his devotion to the salvation of souls, he enters into the lists with indefatigable courage, in order to maintain a generous combat for truth, notwithstanding the double burthen of the episcopate and of advanced age. One can see that he has purposed in this book to re-establish the integrity of faith and morals amongst the faithful, to avenge the calumnies of the wicked, and to scatter the darkness of error. He completely overthrows all the dreams of materialists, deists, and other impious

* Cum nihil injurium, impervium nihil, viro apostolico sit in animarum salute procuranda; hinc multiplici licet sollicitudinum mole Ecclesiæ suæ gravatus, devexa licet ætate, eadem tamen animi fortitudine ad certandum bonum fidei certamen progreditur. Omnia in eo tendere visa sunt ut integra fides et ingenui mores ab impiorum calumniis et pravarum opinionum caligine vindicentur materialistarum et deistarum, aliorumque perditorum hominum deliramenta penitus convellantur.

men." Canon Simioli wrote to the king, saying, "This very pious author has not feared to show forth all the ardour of his faith and of his charity; and in some sentiments which are peculiar to himself, he has given a vivid picture of his piety and religion."

Pope Clement XIII. was extremely gratified by reading our Saint's work, and he replied to the dedication, which had been addressed to him, by a brief, dated August 4th, 1769, in which the holy father testified his esteem for our bishop's learning and zeal in these terms:* "We have received your book against the errors which now overrun almost the whole of Europe with the greatest pleasure; first, because it is by you, and many of your other writings have caused us to appreciate your talent and your doctrine, as well as the great zeal with which you are filled for the glory of God; and next, because we hope that it will be very useful and obtain great success. We have begun to read it, and

* "Librum tuum adversus errores qui nunc temporis omnem propemodum infecerunt Europam, libentissime accepimus, tum quod tuus est, cujus probe novimus ex pluribus aliis scriptis tuis, et ingenium, et doctrinam, et Dei zelum magnopere flagrantem; tum quod confidimus utilissimum futurum, maximeque frugiferum. Illum evolvere cœpimus, nec dubitamus quin, ut ea quæ hactenus legimus nobis placuere, sic reliqua placitura. Cæterum, venerabilis frater, te summopere amamus, quod minime contentus uni Ecclesiæ tuæ prodesse, quidquid temporis tibi superest ex episcopali tua procuratione, id perire non pateris, sed omne consumis in ejusmodi laboribus, quorum utilitas non circumscribitur finibus tuæ diœcesis, sed ad Ecclesiam porrigitur universam. Deum rogamus, firmam ut tibi tribuat valetudinem, et vitam addat et vires, quo alia complura, quæ forte inchoasti, feliciter possis absolvere, et fraternitati tuæ benevolentiæ nostræ in pignus apostolicam benedictionem peramenter impertimur."

have no doubt that the pages which we have not read are worthy to follow those which we have already looked over. In conclusion, venerable brother, we must express our great affection for you, and the extent of our joy at your not only watching over the good of your own church, but also profiting by the slightest portion of leisure remaining to you after fulfilling the duties of your office, by bestowing it on labours, the usefulness of which is not bounded by the limits of your diocese, but embraces the church universal. We pray God to give you health, life, and strength, so that you may be able to succeed in finishing all the other works which you have perhaps commenced ; and as a token of our goodwill we heartily give you our apostolical benediction."

The ignorance which overspread the diocese, and the wish to aid the people, led Alphonso to compose an extremely useful work at this time, which he published under the title of "Instructions on the Precepts of the Decalogue," in order that they may be properly kept, and on the Sacraments, in order that they may be rightly received. This book is short, but its great utility caused it to be highly praised, especially by the parish priests. The preacher Jourdain, the royal examiner, said in regard to it, "Whether one considers the matter of the thoughts of this treatise, or the manner in which they are expressed, every one who examines it with attention must see that it is worthy of its author's name, that is to say, of a learned man

full of zeal for God's honour and the salvation of souls."

In this work his Lordship again attacks those rigorous minds who, in affecting great purity of doctrine, and the Christianity of primitive ages, oppress souls by an insupportable yoke, with which Jesus Christ never loaded them. "This is not the doctrine of the Church," said he, "for she glories in being a mother, and not a cruel step-mother. Jansenius and his followers have invented this severity; I would ask if the number of souls whom they have caused to fall into hell through an erring conscience does not exceed the number of those whom they have led to Paradise; besides, it is clear that the sentiments which they have adopted are not those of the holy bishops whom we honour on our altars, nor of those saintly labourers who have sacrificed their blood and their life for the salvation of but one soul. We have not yet seen a Jansenist," said Alphonso, "who has lost an hour's sleep to insure the salvation of a soul."

While so occupied about the interests of the Church and of his diocese, he did not lose sight of that of his congregation. On the 20th of June of this same year he sent the following instructions to Father Villani, to be given to all in his name: "Tell the new superiors not to make new buildings of little importance without the approbation of the consultors of the house. If they are of consequence, they must not be undertaken without my permission; they must

not go to expense for books of high price. It is right to think of treating the subjects better as to food, so that they may not complain, and may be more willing in submitting to the rule. Tell the superiors also to exercise gentleness towards all, and to correct with charity and in secret. When the faults are public, they must first be corrected in private; let them have mildness as well as firmness. That which is granted to one without a special cause, cannot easily be refused to another, and thus the observance of the rule is lost. Communicate this to the rectors from me, either orally or in writing." Believing the house at Nocera to be the most liable to distractions, from being frequented by the citizens, and from receiving friends who came from Naples, or returned thither on their way, he wrote to the superior of this house from Airola, on the 25th of the same month, saying, "I beg you to communicate the following orders to the community of St. Michael. No father, or brother, or pensioner, must go to the kitchen, except those whose office calls them there; all must assist at the exercises of the community, with the exception of those who are really ill, or have our express permission to absent themselves; no one must go to hear confessions in the convents of religious more than once a month; no one must receive new penitents except on Thursday, as is stated in the rule; let no one go out of a convent to walk, and specially not on great feasts. In conclusion, our fathers and brothers must not hold long conversations under the

doorway or in the garden, and still less in the rooms with priests or seculars, unless by an express permission from your Reverence, and for a just cause. I embrace and bless you."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE disturbances in regard to the two houses of Iliceto and of Ciorani went on increasing. Our fear as to our adversaries' power was but too well founded. Our two houses were in danger, but that of Iliceto, which enjoyed the confidence of the king, for the services it had rendered to him in regard to his hunting ground, still numbered several noblemen amongst its protectors, and in particular the chief minister, the Marquis Tanucci. This latter provided for every thing in the offices of justice, without regard to expense, and supported us in the provincial courts by his influence.

As the storm became more and more alarming, we redoubled our entreaties to Alphonso, to try and persuade him to go to Naples in person, in order to hold a conference with the Marquis of Tanucci. Although the marquis took pleasure in being of service to him on every opportunity, yet, as he was prejudiced in favour of the gentlemen of Iliceto, he gave us much cause for fear. "Tanucci," wrote Alphonso to Father

Villani, "has had an audience of Mgr. Albertini; if he has not attached faith to this prelate's words, he would be still less disposed to believe me, who am an interested party. If I see that I can be of any use, I will not fail to exercise it; I believe that I love the congregation as much as your Reverence does, so that you ought never to fear that I shall neglect the least thing which I may know would be of use to the congregation."

On the 20th of June, 1767, he wrote the following exhortation from Airola to his congregation: "My brothers, let us be united to Jesus Christ, for we are in great perils at the present time; and in order that the congregation may escape uninjured out of the persecutions it is suffering, we have need of the assistance of our blessed Lord. But if we do not conduct ourselves well, God will abandon us. I advise you therefore to study the crucifix, and to converse with persons who are without as little as possible, otherwise we shall lose fervour. I also beg you to fly from parents' houses with the greatest carefulness. You have had of late instances enough of subjects losing their vocation from having wished to frequent their paternal roof, and God only knows where they will end. Be careful, for we are at present in danger of being sent away from our houses, and this would be the greatest punishment which God could inflict on us. I bless and greet you all in the sacred heart of Jesus Christ."

Our adversaries continued to redouble their

efforts, and we had no peace left. They heaped one slander on another, and not only besieged the ministers by their importunities, but even the sovereign himself. Maffei especially waged a furious war against us; wishing to triumph over all obstacles at any cost, he scattered money and gifts with profusion, in order to obtain the glory of victory, and endeavoured to dislodge us from Iliceto at all hazards, and even to see the whole congregation fall.

Father Villani went to see his Lordship in great sorrow, and the more hastily, because the cause was to be brought before the royal tribunal, and the advocate Don Gaetan Celano had informed the ministers and prepared the defence; on these tidings, Alphonso sent his secretary to Caserto with two letters, one for the Marquis of Tanucci and the other for the Marquis of Marco, to beg them to deign to commence the cause in consideration of the reasons which he assigned.

Although the Marquis of Tanucci never gave audiences to any one, yet when he heard that Mgr. Liguori's secretary wished to see him, he admitted him, and after having read the letter, he answered him, "Tell Mgr. Liguori, that what is fitting shall be done." When the Marquis of Marco arrived at Naples, the other letter was immediately delivered to him, and he was told that a similar one had been presented to the Marquis Tanucci. "This affair puzzles me," he replied, "for in order to do a service to Mgr. Liguori, I have come for the very purpose of ordering the cause to be postponed." In fact,

Secretary Verzella arrived at Arienzo nearly at the same time as an ordinance which had been despatched to his Lordship, in which the marquis, in assuring him that his wishes had been complied with, reiterated his offers of service.

In spite of these contradictions, Alphonso did not lose courage. "In regard to our affairs," he wrote to Father Villani on the 7th of July, "it does not appear to me that we have so much cause to fear, for it is clear that we are not guilty of manifest contravention of the law; besides, God is near us, so we ought to pray to Him." But the tempest however became still more furious, and our alarm was redoubled. Father Villani, accompanied by some other Fathers, repaired to St. Agatha, and all with tearful eyes represented our enemies' superiority to his Lordship, and the imminent danger which menaced us. They told him at the same time, that if he wished to save the congregation his presence in Naples was necessary. But Alphonso was strong in his innocence, and had no doubt of obtaining the protection of God: "What could I do by my presence?" he said to them; "that which my letters cannot obtain, I shall be unable to obtain myself." He was moved at seeing our affliction however, and ill as he was he resolved to set out. All his retinue on this journey and all his methods of defence were masses and prayers; confidence in God and protection from on high strengthened his courage. Towards the twelfth of the same month, he wrote to Father

Cajone, the rector of Caposeli: "I go to Naples about our affairs; make a novena for this intention. My stay in this town will not be long." As he had no carriage he borrowed that of Don Marcello Mazzoni, and arrived at Naples on the 16th of July, 1767.

As soon as he reached it he went to the Cardinal Archbishop's. His Eminence was at dinner when the arrival of Mgr. Liguori was announced to him; he immediately arose, and with eyes bathed in tears, through joy at this unexpected visit, he hastened to meet Alphonso, and gave him a fraternal kiss. "What has brought you to Naples so unexpectedly?" he said to him. "My congregation is passing through a great crisis, your Eminence," answered Alphonso; "our enemies wish to destroy it, but I hope that God will still grant us the assistance of His arm." After a long interview they went out together. The cardinal wished to take Alphonso in his carriage, but as his brother Hercules had lent him his he excused himself, saying that he wished to go to the church of the Virgins, to assist at a novena of St. Vincent of Paul, which was being celebrated there together with exposition of the Blessed Sacrament; and in fact he followed the exercises there without missing a single day. Before leaving him the cardinal said to him, "Know that you are archbishop of Naples; you must obtain the victory and dispose of everything as you wish."

Mgr. Liguori's arrival put the whole town in motion. As soon as he came the canons, su-

periors of orders, chevaliers, advocates, and ministers, came to greet him; the people hurried in crowds eager to do him homage. Almost all the prelates who were in Naples went to visit him. As to him, as he had only come for urgent business, he begged every one to excuse him if he reluctantly failed in the duties of civility.

Humility and poverty were his attendants; he lived in his brother's house, but he did not wish to be treated with distinction; he gave up the room and state-bed which his brother had had prepared for him to his secretary, and selected quite a plain little apartment for himself, which was used as a lumber-room. It had nothing in it but a miserable bed, with some straw chairs. When he had not to officiate in any church, Alphonso merely put on the cassock of his congregation, which he had worn every day at St. Agatha, and which was then quite worn out. His shoes were the ones he had had made when he went to Rome; he had the same hat then, which was no longer in fashion, and had only cost three carlines when new. His brother Don Hercules, who was more annoyed at this hat than at anything else, secretly took it away from him, and substituted a valuable one in its place. His Lordship was sorry to be obliged to have to wear it, but before he left Naples he caused it to be valued and sold, and with the produce he bought four more common hats: he kept one for himself and gave us the remaining three. As he had no cloak, he made use of a kind of mantilla; as he was told that that was not fit

for him, he sent it to the pawn-broker's in change for an old cloak, which caused him an expense of fifteen carlines.

To obviate all personal pomp and ostentation he used all possible pains to have as humble an exterior as he could. When he was invited to any church, which he could not avoid, whether for preaching or to celebrate the holy offices, he put on his violet dress, but he wore the habit of the congregation at every other time. Cardinal Sersale joked with him on this subject one day, and said, "Am I to take you for a Greek or a Latin bishop at present? Tell us then which you are." "I do not know," continued he, turning to Mgr. San-Severino, "how he can enjoy the privileges of the forum and pass for a bishop; he has scarcely any sign of being one." Alphonso in fact wore no distinctive mark except a small cross at his breast, and that was so poor a one that it could hardly be seen.

Some people gave him the title of your Excellency, "Excellency!" said Alphonso, "what do you mean by this title? Drop this Excellency." He had a singular altercation with a servant at a monastery on this head, who was continually addressing him by this title. "Come now," said Alphonso to him, "give up this word Excellency." "But," replied the servitor, "why am I not to call you thus? you are a chevalier, and this title belongs to you." "That is enough," replied his Lordship, "do not speak to me any more about your Excellency." He said

this in a tone which made the poor servant hurry to the door as fast as possible. On seeing that his love of humility had no bounds, the advocate, Charles Melchionna, could not help telling him that he carried this virtue too far. "Humility," replied Alphonso, "has never injured any one." One evening some musicians came to offer themselves for the novenas in his diocese; Alphonso received them kindly, and accompanied them to the end of the hall when they went away; several gentlemen who were present could not sufficiently admire such great condescension.

Our saint was always preceded by humility, but glory and veneration followed him wherever he went. When he went to the royal palace to implore the protection of Prince de la Riccia, his majesty's grand equerry, he was received there not as a mere man, but as a messenger from heaven. As soon as the prince heard that he was in the ante-room, he hastened to go to him, and respectfully kissed his hand. When he knew the reason of the bishop's visit, he took an interest in our cause, and promised to render the congregation every assistance in his power; and when Alphonso took leave of him, he accompanied him to the staircase with quite affectionate kindness. "I thank God," exclaimed the prince on leaving him, "for having allowed me to see this saintly man once more!" When he presented himself at the Marquis of Marco's, he was giving audience to another bishop, whom he immediately dismissed to go and meet the bishop

of St. Agatha: he respectfully kissed his hand, and after having listened to him with interest, he was not satisfied with merely accompanying him to the door of the ante-chamber, but wished to go still further with him: his Lordship stopped, not wishing to trespass further on his politeness; but the marquis was beforehand with him, and said, "With others it is as far as this, but with you it is as far as that," and he accompanied him to the hall door, and kissed his hand a second time. The Marquis Cavalcanti, lord of the bed-chamber, received him with no less veneration. When his Lordship's unexpected visit was announced to him, he hurried to receive him, and did not take leave of him without accompanying him to the foot of the stairs. The prince of St. Nicandre received him with respectful delight. This prince was one of the regents and governor to our present sovereign. After having welcomed him with repeated testimonies of the greatest veneration, he wanted to accompany him when he went away; he went down stairs with him, and only consented to leave him at the vestibule, never wearying in kissing his hand and recommending himself to his prayers.

I cannot also omit to mention the marks of veneration which he received from the Marquis of Cito, his friend and the president of the royal council. As soon as he heard of his arrival he went to meet him, kissed his hand, and conducted him into his room with respect, he shut the door, and listened to him with kind interest.

The interview was so prolonged that a great number of councillors and lords whom the president had convoked together, and who were waiting in the ante-chamber, lost patience and went away murmuring. "When the president wishes to give an audience to Mgr. Liguori," said they, "he ought to post up a notice to that effect all over Naples, and not admit any one else." When Alphonso went away, the marquis accompanied him down stairs, conducted him to the carriage, and again kissed his hand.

Alphonso's appearance at Naples put our adversaries to confusion; their very counsel said, as soon as they saw him go to the ministers, that the case had an altered aspect, and while they had previously pretended that the missionaries were lost and the congregation suppressed, now that they saw that they were protected they changed their tone into one of praise. Our adversaries themselves could not help doing us justice; they pursued the affair, though they would have liked to suspend it; they even sought to obtain as a favour what they had no right to claim.

The inhabitants of Naples had already a high idea of Alphonso's sanctity, but this occasion caused them to entertain a still more exalted opinion of him. He managed to justify the missionaries without slandering their enemies, and he defended innocence without injuring those who had caluminated it. He attributed our adversaries' attacks to interest, and their irritation to passionate temper. Cunning and malice were

equally foreign to Alphonso; he only sought to procure tranquillity to those belonging to him, and to obtain the prince's protection for the congregation.

This conduct conciliated even the esteem of those who favoured our adversaries; every one admired his moderation, and condemned the animosity of our enemies. The advocates, who till then believed that they were sure of victory, and had sought to have the cause brought on, saw that the circumstances were changed, and now tried to delay it, no longer thinking it expedient to venture further. This delay was displeasing to Alphonso, and by his solicitations with the ministers, he obtained the king's leave to have the affairs terminated without loss of time; and the 11th of September was fixed for the discussion of the cause of Sarnelli, at the royal court of justice at St. Clare.

The devil foresaw his defeat, and did not fail to labour to cause Alphonso to perish, and in him to deprive the congregation of its only support. He was one day in a carriage with the counsellor Gaetan Celano, who was afterwards his majesty's counsellor; they had just left Counsellor Vargas; night was approaching, and the rain was falling in torrents, their coachman urged the horses on as fast as possible towards the court of Counsellor Pirelli, in order to gain shelter; but other carriages had already taken refuge there, and so he was obliged to turn back again; but another carriage came up at a rapid rate, and struck with violence against that of

his Lordship, and in the fall Alphonso was thrown under Counsellor Celano. The windows were broken to pieces, and the coachman was wounded as well as the footman. His Lordship was not at all the worse, but Counsellor Celano had his hand cut; they both disengaged themselves from the carriage, but with great difficulty, and took refuge in a grocer's shop, more dead than alive. The Duchess of Pirelli heard of the accident, and sent for his Lordship and the counsellor. They rested in her palace for some time, after which the duchess lent them her own equipage to take them home again. In this disaster Alphonso regretted nothing but his beautiful hat, which was lost in the confusion, as well as the magnificent wooden stick which he used as a cane.

The proceedings in reference to the cause were at length commenced; Alphonso conquered without having ever striven. As it was foreseen that the discussion would be a stormy one, a number of curious people attended at the court of justice, of whom some took part with the missionaries, and the others anticipated the pleasure of witnessing their defeat. Advocate Celano appeared there, but the advocates of the adverse party had not the courage to show themselves. One of them indeed came, but only to declare that he had not the heart to speak against a bishop whose sanctity was proclaimed by all Naples. Our enemies' inaction was displeasing to Alphonso; he sent his secretary to the President Cito's, to complain of this disap-

pointment. "He need not be annoyed at seeing his enemies put to flight," replied the magistrate; "let him take courage and return to his diocese in peace."

Such was Alphonso's success in this visit to the capital. He took leave of all his acquaintances, after a sojourn of two months and three days, and set out for Arienzo on the 19th of September, 1767. He afterwards wrote to Father Cajone, the superior at Caposeli, saying, "You must first know that I have been at Naples for several months, where God willed that I should leave our affairs in a deplorable state; the tempest has been violent, and is not yet entirely appeased. I beg you to continue the discipline on Monday, as well as the Saturday fast which has been solemnly promised to the Blessed Virgin in thanksgiving for her protection under the present persecutions." In another letter to Father Gajano, the Rector of Ciorani, dated 3rd of October, he said, "I beg you to recommend strict observance of rule, humility, and fraternal charity to all. Let no one complain of poverty, let humiliations be endured cheerfully, let no one aspire to be preferred before the rest, still less let no one allow himself to oppose the superiors or fail in obedience. The non-observance of the rule makes me tremble much more than all our persecutions; let us act as we ought towards God, and Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin will not fail to assist us."

CHAPTER XL.

Although Alphonso only went to Naples on account of the interests of his congregation, which was undergoing such dangerous persecutions, he nevertheless made his visit subserve to the glory of God, and fatal to sin and hell.

Great disorders had taken place for some time in the convent called the Religious of the Wood. These nuns, without respect for the superior, who tried to unite them, had proceeded to sad lengths on several occasions. Mgr. Targiani, who was the person bound to maintain order in this convent, had sent the celebrated missionary Joseph Jorio there, but this truly apostolical man could obtain nothing. On hearing of the arrival of the Bishop of St. Agatha at Naples, they both entreated him to lend them aid in pacifying these angry religious. Alphonso went to the convent several times, and preached there, and that which Joseph Jorio had not been able to effect by his words, still less Mgr. Targiani by his authority, was obtained by his humility and mildness. He put an end to all the dissensions which existed in the convent, and was able to re-establish peace there, the love of prayer, and the frequent use of the sacraments. Mgr. Targiani was quite overjoyed. Alphonso also found out some abuses as to the management of this convent; he informed Mgr. Tar-

giani of them, and he, as well as the religious, had the satisfaction of seeing them remedied.

Canon Mazzaccara, who was the superior of the Congregation of Propaganda at that time, wished to take advantage of Alphonso's presence at Naples, and resolved to ask him to preach the novena on the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in the church of St. Restitutius. The solemnity of this novena is celebrated in the capital; the canon feared that Alphonso would not be able to grant his request, as he was ill and overloaded with business. "If you wish to have him," said the advocate Don Charles Melchionna to him, "you have an infallible means of obtaining what you want; he is a brother of your congregation; exercise your authority as superior over him, command, and he will obey you." This expedient succeeded. When the humble bishop received this order, he made no opposition, but bent his head and said, "Pray that the Blessed Virgin may give me strength, for I have nothing written, and no time to prepare anything; you must be satisfied with what God and the Blessed Virgin may deign to suggest to me." However, as he was suffering from asthma, he thought that there would be imprudence in attempting it, but as Mgr. Sersale in turn also begged him to do the same thing, "I will commence the novena," Alphonso said to him, "but I do not know if I shall be able to go on with it." "Begin it, at any rate," answered the cardinal, "and if your asthma makes you suffer too much to go on, I will replace you myself."

No sooner was it known in the town that Mgr. Liguori would give this novena, than the church from the first day was filled by a number of priests and religious, and Cardinal Sersale never failed to come with all his suite. Towards the evening of the same day our saint was obliged to go to the archbishop's, but he found that his carriage, the very one which his brother Gaetan had got, had been sent to be repaired, and was not yet come back again; his intendant took another belonging to Don Hercules, which was rich and handsome-looking. Such luxury alarmed our bishop, who was not pacified on being told that no one could be surprised at seeing him in his brother's carriage. His coachman and simple livery on so brilliant an equipage quite alarmed him; in order to prevent his going on foot, old harness was put on the horses' backs, and an old covering was put over the seat. This mixture of old and new together caused the bishop of St. Agatha to present a somewhat singular appearance.

When the tidings of his giving this novena were more widely circulated, the chief among the nobility were anxious to assist at it, as well as many ladies of the most distinguished families; as the church was very confined, some noblemen of the highest rank went there before the time for the sermon. The crowd was so great that the Swiss were placed at the doors of the church to avoid confusion, to prevent crushing, and to restrain the multitude. Alphonso's voice was wonderful, and notwithstanding his great age

he made himself heard in all parts of the building.

The most distinguished literary people were also eager to be present, well knowing that they had not to expect pompous and flowery discourses from Alphonso, but they came to admire his energy and apostolic eloquence: "Would to God that every one preached like that!" said one of them. "The Gospel would cease to be an object of contempt." Another said that the word of God had much more weight from Mgr. Liguori's mouth, than from any one else's; floods of tears were shed in the church, and his Eminence, who made it a duty to assist at the novena daily, could not refrain from weeping at the touching spectacle of an entire people in contrition. It would have required a person to have no heart not to be affected at the end of his sermon, and especially when he excited the feelings. His transports of love towards the most Blessed Virgin and the Blessed Sacrament, were so tender that the most hardened could not help manifesting their emotion by their sobs. Canon Sparano declared that ten missions would not have done so much good, nor effected so many conversions as God did during this novena through Mgr. Liguori. That which is especially remarkable is, as we have said, that the learned and the nobility were his most eager listeners.

On the last day, which was that of the Benediction, Alphonso ended by filling the hearts of all present with unbounded confidence in the Mother of Jesus, whose patronage he was cele-

brating. This sermon was so divine, that it is even now spoken of with admiration. The impression it made was general and extraordinary; on all the preceding days the cardinal made an inclination to his Lordship on retiring; but this last day he went away without any gesture, sobbing and wiping his eyes. It was all an effort of mind on Alphonso's part, he made no preparation at home, but in the church before the Blessed Sacrament. After the sermon he still remained before the altar as if entranced, and although bathed in perspiration he did not leave the church until after the benediction had been given. The canons, the chevaliers, and persons of the highest rank were eager to kiss his hand, and several threw themselves at his feet in order to receive his blessing. Pieces of his garments were also taken from him in secret; amongst others, a piece of his cloak was cut off. Mgr. Bergame, at that time the priest, and afterwards the Bishop of Gaeta, thought himself very fortunate in being able to take his hat in exchange for another. He attempted the same thing with his rosary, but Alphonso found it out; he complained of it, and wished to have it restored to him again, on account of the indulgences attached to it. As the cause of his coming to Naples was known, it was difficult to admire enough the way in which he laboured so solicitously for the good of souls, when he had such a serious and weighty matter on hand. "He gives a lesson to bishops," said the wisest amongst them; "he has lawful reasons for being

far from his diocese, but unlike those who come to Naples and are only occupied in amusing themselves, Mgr. Liguori steals time from his occupations to try and win souls to God." A distinguished priest happened to meet him in the street, and hastened up to him and kissed his hand. "I was impelled to do it," he afterwards acknowledged, "by his poverty and humility, which make him worthy of this homage, and so different to those prelates who come to Naples richly clothed and go about the town with a suite of lackeys." Alphonso's appearance was a bitter censure on many, and our saint's praises were but too often followed by blame of the conduct of some others.

There were however some partisans of pomp and worldly grandeur who did not entertain the same opinion in his favour. On the eve of the assumption, he went to pay his visit to the Blessed Sacrament in the church of the convent Regina Cœli; while the nuns were chanting vespers, he knelt down before a chair in a corner of the church. Three abbots were officiating pontifically; one of them who knew him no sooner saw him in his shabby dress than he turned towards the others and said, "Look what a figure this bishop is! Does he not disgrace his character?" The abbot soon found that he was not a good judge. The Prince of Monte-Miletto, who was present, also saw Alphonso, and immediately asked his valet who that prelate was; on hearing that it was Mgr. Liguori, he approached him respectfully, kissed his hand,

and held it to his forehead for some time. The Duke of Andria also presented himself to him, or rather cast himself at his feet, and would not consent to arise until after he had received the sign of the cross on his head; some other noblemen also hastened to render him the same homage. The abashed abbots then sent him a velvet cushion by the sacristan, but Alphonso would not use it.

A noble lady took the religious habit in the Convent of Miracles, and his Lordship was asked to sing the high mass; the cardinal-archbishop, Mgr. the nuncio, and several other bishops were also invited there. The church was full of noblemen and gentlemen. On the entrance of the nuncio and the cardinal, not one of the assembled people arose from their seat, as I was informed by Canon Don Francis Rozzano, who was present; some of them were satisfied with making a mere inclination to the prelates; others took no notice of them at all; but when Alphonso appeared, the noblemen and chevaliers eagerly advanced and vied with each other in hastening to kiss his hand. His humility procured him these honours, which all the pompous state of the others could not obtain.

When the Barefooted Carmelite fathers commenced the solemnity of the Wednesdays in honour of St. Theresa, Alphonso, who had taken this saint for his special advocate, did not fail to attend there, and mixing with the people he placed himself according to custom on one of the benches in the church. When the fathers

perceived him, they wished to show him some token of respect, but Alphonso refused it. On the following Wednesday the fathers prepared a special chair with a velvet cushion for him, but in vain, for he made no use of it. On coming out of the church the same fathers accompanied him with marks of respect, and conducted him to his carriage.

The least instant of leisure time at home was always employed by Alphonso for the good of souls. He received the visits of the priests, confessors, and other ecclesiastics until a late hour in the evening, as well those of the magistrates, knights of the order of St. Januarius, and others. Many ladies who could not speak to him in the confessional also came to see him at his house, and amongst others the Princess de la Riccia, the Princess of Cassano Serra, and the duchesses of Bovino and of Cesarini; the former duchess especially took pleasure in kneeling at his feet to receive his benediction.

Alphonso had the gift of prophecy, as well as those of knowledge and counsel. A daughter of the Duchess of Bovino's, who was on the point of leaving a convent in order to embrace the state of marriage, still hesitated in regard to her vocation; the duchess went to his Lordship and begged him to remember her in his prayers. "No, no," replied Alphonso, "she will not marry. God will detach her from the world and draw her to Himself." The young lady's mind, up to this time, had been occupied about anything rather than becoming a religious; her mother

was therefore much surprised to hear these words from the saintly man, but she was still more so when a note was handed to her on her return home, from her daughter, stating her intention of taking the religious habit in the convent. The young duchess became a nun, and was that Donna Delphine Guevara who has continued to edify the convent of Alvina by her exalted virtue.

Lady Marianne Capano Orsini gave birth to a little son at Marianella about this time. Don Hercules wished that the ceremony of baptism should be performed by Alphonso himself. His Lordship assented. Don Hercules also wished the infant to bear the name of Alphonso. During the ceremony of the baptism, the priest in addressing Alphonso gave him the title of Excellence at every instant; his Lordship bore it at first, in order not to interrupt the ceremony, but at last he could bear it no longer, and so he exclaimed, "Rev. Sir, if you wish to call me Most Illustrious you can of course do so, but you will oblige me very much by only using the most simple expressions in speaking to me!"

The novena of which we have spoken was not Alphonso's sole occupation: zeal is like mighty waters which appear peaceful and tranquil at their source, but which inundate the plains and country when they begin to overflow. Thus when Alphonso once began to work he could not contain his ardour for the salvation of souls; he excepted no one, and rejoiced in being employed for the good of the poorest and most obscure. Don Charles Bergame, the priest of whom

we have spoken, asked him to preach a sermon in his Church of the Advocate, for the confraternity of the coachmen, footmen, and other domestics. His dear brethren of the chapels, amongst whom was the celebrated Peter Barberese, his former penitent, also heard his holy exhortations once more.

A head saddler begged him to come and preach in his chapel, which was situated beyond the gate of Capua; Alphonso went there most willingly. He found a very large assemblage of the lower classes, but as the chapel could not hold them all, he reassembled them in the church of the monastery of St. Onuphre. He caused the Blessed Sacrament to be exposed, and excited his numerous auditors to love Jesus Christ, and to serve the Blessed Virgin with devotion; he enforced the duty of fraternal charity, and encouraged them to seek for new members. These good people assembled together on another occasion, in the hospital of the Annunziata; the Blessed Sacrament was exposed at the end of the gallery, and Alphonso excited them all to the practice of Christian virtue. He was also asked to preach a sermon to them on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and he yielded to their wishes. The orphans who are brought up in this hospital, and they amount to the number of more than three hundred, hearing of the happy fruits of compunction which he had produced by these exercises, also asked to hear him, and his Lordship satisfied them on the following Sunday. The people were not satisfied with pro-

fiting by his words in church, but they hastened in crowds to his house, and as he had not seats enough for all, they sat down on the ground. His Lordship rejoiced in being in the midst of this multitude of poor people, much more than in being surrounded by the chevaliers of St. Januarius, and his loving-kindness towards these unfortunate people won him the admiration of all the town of Naples besides.

He was occupied after dinner by the novena to our Blessed Lady, or in attending to the affairs of his congrègation, reserving the morning for visiting the monasteries; but he could hardly fix on which to go to first, for they were nearly all equally urgent in asking to see him. There were few of those deserving commendation, who had not the consolation of hearing his words, and wherever he went the gift of prophecy and his penetration into hearts, were seen with admiration. He visited the convents of Donna Alvina, of St. Clare, of Sapientia, of St. Marcellinus, of St. Gandioso, of St. Liguori, of the Blessed Sacrament, of St. Jerome, of Little St. John's, of Donna Romita, of St. Potitus, of St. Andrew of the Nuns, and others. He felt great devotion to the memory of the Blessed Jane de Chantal; when he was invited to celebrate mass on her feast day at the convent of the Nuns of the Visitation, he went with pleasure. He preached in each of these monasteries, and returned several times to some of them to hear confessions. Nothing whereby he could encourage hearts in virtue and the love of Jesus Christ was accounted by him as too much.

Although Cardinal Sersale told Alphonso when he first came to Naples, that he, and no one else, was Archbishop of Naples, Alphonso never deviated from his profound humility, and as he did not wish to take advantage of such kindness, he never did anything without informing the cardinal. A religious asked him to hear her confession; he immediately sent his secretary, Verzella, to ask for the faculty to do so from Canon Carracciolo, the secretary to the nuns; and as he had not the power to grant it, he applied to the cardinal, who replied, half displeased, "What does Mgr. Liguori want? Did I not tell him that he was Archbishop of Naples? He may confirm, confess, preach, and officiate, and do whatever he pleases, for he has power to do anything."

Amongst the prophecies which his Lordship made in regard to inmates of convents, I will only cite the following, for fear of being tedious. Alphonso's sister, Marianne Liguori, a nun in the convent of St. Jerome, manifested want of submission towards her director; his Lordship predicted that she would die mad, and it speedily came to pass. The Princess Zurlo, a pensioner of the convent of St. Marcellinus, had an earnest desire to become a religious; when this young lady's fervour was mentioned to his Lordship he answered, "No, she will not be a nun, but she will return to the world and lead a saintly life there;" and his words proved to be true. At St. Clare, Donna Beatrix Folgon tried to interest him in a niece of hers, whom she wanted him to

get apmitted into the convent, although she had already left it. "Leave her alone," answered Alphonso, "she is not fit for a convent." And so it was; she no longer wished to consecrate herself to God.

Alphonso made no distinction of persons; he acted just in the same manner towards convents for ladies of no rank as towards those of ladies of noble birth. He willingly consented to go and visit the convents of the Little Rosary, of St. Margaret, St. Monica, of the Miracles, of Jesus and Mary, of St. Catherine, of St. Joseph, and of St. Theresa. He was also invited to go to the convent of St. Philip and St. James, when he gave a sermon on the prodigal son, and his visits were always marked by great blessing, as God assisted his efforts.

Alphonso especially liked to preach in places devoted to penitence: besides going to the convent called the Religious of the Wood, and the hospital of the Annunziata, he also preached several times at the Refuge of St. Clare, where there was a penitent lady from Frascio. He visited the penitents of St. Raphael, where he placed a penitent from Arpaja; he also accepted the invitation of the Rev. Thomas Fiore, who asked him to go to the Penitents of the Crucifix; it was especially edifying to see him return from the most humble and despised places, with still more pleasure than from the convents for the nobility.

He did not omit to go and comfort a great many infirm nuns, and particularly his old pen-

itents. He evinced his scrupulosity in regard to holy modesty during these visits. In order to prevent his hand from being kissed, he kept his left hand across his breast, and wrapped up the other in a hankerchief. When asked to make the sign of the cross on a sick person's forehead, he only consented to give her his blessing at a distance; whenever he entered any convent, he wished to be accompanied by a priest to help him, as he said, but in reality it was as a precaution. Although so aged, and loaded with infirmities, he never omitted to provide himself with hair-shirts and iron chains, and to discipline himself to blood.

I cannot help mentioning here a prophecy which he uttered at Santa-Margaritella, which was as remarkable as it was instantaneous. Sister Mary Concetta Ronchi, who had been suffering for a long time and was confined to bed, heard that Alphonso was in Naples, and manifested a wish to see him. The abbess of the convent, who was her sister, sent Alphonso word of this, and begged him to grant this consolation to the sick person, offering to ask for the cardinal's permission if he wished it. "There is no need to ask for it," replied Alphonso, "I will go to the convent to-morrow, and I will say mass for her." There was a mystery about this which could not be understood, but the abbess rejoiced at it, believing that her sister's wishes would be gratified. On the following morning, Alphonso hastened to order his secretary to cause his carriage to be got ready to go to the convent of

Santa-Margaritella, where Sister Mary Concetta had asked him to go. Now, it is necessary to mention that this nun had died on the preceding night. When Alphonso arrived at the convent, those who accompanied him and announced the visit which he wished to pay to the sick nun, could not help laughing on hearing that her body was exposed in the church, but Alphonso went to the church straight without any surprise, saw the deceased on the catafalque, and celebrated mass for her, as he had promised.

When he saw any good to be done by it, he never omitted to return where he was asked to do so as we have already said; but if his visit were only a matter of compliment, he sought how to avoid it. The religious of Little St. John's were not satisfied with having seen him at the grate and having assisted at his mass, they solicited him to repeat his visit; but as this was not in order to consult him as a director, he did not accede to their invitation. They therefore got Father Januarius Fatigati to intercede in their favour, but he also received a negative answer, and as Alphonso saw that he insisted on it, he said to him in a displeased tone, "Don Januarius, I like much to go to St. John, but not to Little St. John's; they have caused me to lose an hour, and I am scrupulous about time."

His Lordship was also honoured by other tokens of veneration and respect when at Naples, which I think ought not to be passed over in silence. As his cousin Father Cavalieri was

provincial of the Dominicans at St. Thomas Aquinas, Alphonso could not avoid dining at their table. The young men at the Chinese College also solicited to have him; Alphonso went there, and rejoiced to see so many young soldiers of Jesus Christ animated with the desire of fighting the Lord's battles in a distant land. He was also obliged to yield to the entreaties of Father de Matteis, the ex-provincial of the Jesuits, who asked him for the festival of St. Ignatius; Alphonso officiated in the convent, remained to dinner, and assisted at the panegyric of the founder on the same day. This feast of St. Ignatius was the last which these religious celebrated in Naples. He was also invited by Father Sanchez to assist at a thesis on theology, which was to be maintained in the old house of the Jesuits. Father Pagano, his relative, and the provincial, wished him to come early in the morning; Alphonso dined there, but his chief consolation arose from having celebrated mass in the chapel of the venerable Father Mastrilli, towards whom he felt a holy envy for the happiness he had had in obtaining the palm of martyrdom in Japan.

He also accepted several invitations from divers religious societies. The missionaries of St. Pavon, now called of the Conference, wished to hear him speak at one of their assemblies as a fellow-member. Alphonso spoke to them of the zeal which every priest ought to have for the salvation of souls: he exhorted them to preach in apostolic style, and declaimed against a far-

fetched style. "This is indeed a true apostle," said they; "thanks be to God for having given us a bishop of primitive times in this age." They went so far as to say that he deserved to be canonized. When he retired, they accompanied him to the outer court. The missionary Don Charles Zanpoli has attested to me, that there was no instance of any other bishop having ever received so many marks of honour in their congregation as Mgr. Liguori did.

Cardinal Sersale also wished the fervour of the young people of the establishment which he had himself founded for the instruction of young clerics in sacris, in the exercises of the missions, to be animated. He conducted Alphonso there, and concealing his own hands under his arms, made all the young people kiss the Bishop of St. Agatha's hand, despite of his humility. As he was expected they recited discourses of their own composition before him; and those who were the furthest advanced repeated fragments of sermons. Alphonso felt great joy at this sight, and continually exhorted them to preach in an apostolical manner. The cardinal then conducted him to the chapel, where he wished him to give benediction to all the pupils. Alphonso once more spoke to them on the practice of sacerdotal virtues for half an hour, incited them to devote themselves zealously to the salvation of souls, and to be filled with love to Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin.

Although Alphonso effected so much good in

Naples, and although his presence there drew down so many blessings, he never ceased to grieve at being so far from his diocese; he counted the moments, and only longed to return there. "If it were not on account of the interests of the congregation which is persecuted, and which labours so successfully for God's glory and the salvation of souls, I should believe that I sinned mortally in remaining so long in Naples." It must not however be supposed that he ever lost sight of the wants of his diocesans. He took the greatest pains to get a penitent female from Arpaja admitted into the Refuge of St. Raphael. When he asked this favour from the canon who was the director of the house, he received a positive refusal. This woman was a tenant of the Prince de la Riccia's, he therefore went to the palace to sue for his protection; but his valet de chambre remembered that he had received nothing from Alphonso on his first visit to the prince, and had therefore no hopes of getting anything this time; so he said that the prince was in attendance on the king. A soldier of the Italian Guard who was on duty said to a comrade, on seeing this old man, whose long beard and neglected exterior seemed unsuitable to his dignity as a bishop, "Look at this shabby Lord. He has not a half-penny to pay to be shaved!" Alphonso heard it and smiled. "I thank thee, O my God," he said, "for causing me also to receive the censure of the soldiers." But the guard was soon undeceived, and his irony was turned into confusion, when he saw the first

noblemen hasten to pay their respects to the holy bishop. Alphonso returned a second time to the prince's palace, and was again dismissed on some other pretext; he then went a third time, when, on the advice of his secretary Verzella, who suspected the cause of the mystery, he slipped some money into the valet de chambre's hand, and the prince was made visible. He was angry at the refusals and discomforts which Alphonso had met with; he offered to provide for all the needful expenses in regard to the penitent woman, and informed the canon that she was one of his tenants; nothing further was required for her admission. Alphonso then wished to do away with any resentment which the canon might have felt at his having triumphed over his refusal, so he went to him, and begged him to excuse his having applied to the prince, but the canon took the thing with a bad grace, and did not appear inclined to listen to the bishop. He then changed his tone, spoke in an energetical manner to him, and reprimanded him for his want of zeal and the little interest he had shown for this poor soul.

Not a day passed on which he did not receive some courier from his diocese. He had reasons to complain of the conduct of a religious, and let his provincial know that this subject was not in his proper place in the diocese. "What can I do?" replied the superior quickly; "tell his Lordship that I do not know where else to send him." "Oh!" said Alphonso, "he has no place to send him to, and yet perhaps he still wishes

me to pity him!" He sent back Verzella to the provincial, to speak to him in more energetic terms, and the religious was transferred elsewhere before Alphonso returned to St. Agatha. A graduated religious of another monastery underwent the same fate.

At this time Alphonso heard that a gentleman belonging to Arienzo paid suspicious visits to a certain house; this pierced his heart like an arrow. His secretary, on seeing his agitation, suggested that he could write a letter to the gentleman. "A letter!" replied Alphonso quite animatedly; "a letter! We should rather take care that the magistrate should be informed, if we want to reach this culprit; he will know very well how to act for his own interest." He wrote to the magistrate, and from the warnings which he received the gentleman saw what his Lordship intended to do; he immediately went to Naples, acknowledged his offence, and promised to amend. All these things made Alphonso uneasy, and he did nothing but long after his diocese. Don Jorio again importuned him for a novena, but Alphonso replied, "What novena do you wish me to give? I will go and make one in my diocese, where God only knows what disorders I shall find! Jesus Christ no longer wishes me to be at Naples, but at St. Agatha." He could not forget the graces which he had received from the Blessed Virgin in the Church of the Redemption, where he went several times to visit her. "My Queen," he said to Blessed Mary on the last day, "we shall see

each other again in Paradise, but we shall meet no more in Naples."

Such was Mgr. Liguori's sojourn in Naples; he left his diocese with regret, and notwithstanding the rich harvest which he had reaped at Naples, he left this capital with the intention never to return thither again. "Tell Don Hercules," he wrote to his brother Tartaglione from St. Agatha, "that he may freely dispose of the apartments which he keeps at my service, for I shall return there no more."

CHAPTER XLI.

Although Alphonso was unceasingly and excessively solicitous for the right government of his diocese, and though his conduct in this respect obtained the admiration of the most distinguished men and the praises of the Sovereign Pontiff; he could not however escape from the darts of malignity and censure. He experienced that which happens to the greatest masters, whose works are not looked at as wholes, but the most trifling details of which are submitted to the examination of judges, whose only business is to criticise them. The whole economy of his government was like an admirable master-piece; but as shadows often seem substances to the envious, such persons did not fail to find fault with it. His reputation for sanctity caused him to be

attentively watched, and as his administration seemed rather like that of an angel than of an ordinary man, people fancied that he ought to make sin disappear from the world. As soon as any disorder in his diocese was spoken of, people began to calumniate and blame him; for some were too ready to listen to the discourses of the wicked, and co-operated through inexcusable credulity in what the others did though malice.

It is thus that a respectable religious of Naples found fault with, and condemned things in Alphonso which he had not seen, but of which he had heard. The priest Don Salvadore Tramontana, who had Alphonso's interests at heart, heard of these observations, and hastened to inform him of them, begging him to justify himself: "I have heard," Alphonso answered him, "of Father N——'s bad opinion of me. There is no need of writing to him; St. Francis of Sales, Father Torres, and so many others have not defended themselves." The religious said, amongst other things, that the diocese was governed by three people, and not by his Lordship. "The three who rule," answered Alphonso, "are the grand-vicar, who aids me by counsel, Archdeacon Rainone, who performs his duties at St. Agatha, and the secretary who governs still less;" thereby meaning to say that he did everything himself. He expressed himself thus in another letter: "Everything passes through my hands, with the single exception of the ordinary decrees as to temporals, which are under the charge of the grand-vicar here, and of my vice-

gerent at St Agatha." "Tell me, my dear Salvadore," continued he, "where is there a diocese where nothing is wanting? As to me, I do what I can, but all ground produces its thorns; one may pluck out one here, but another will spring up elsewhere. I see that I cannot avoid the reproaches which are made against me; it is enough if God does not complain: however, complaints are of use to me as regards my spiritual welfare, by humbling me through the contempt and want of favour which I must meet with from some people. May God make them holier than they already are. I should be very glad if you would tell Father N. to come and see me, because he can then be enlightened as to the real state of things." The good father went to his Lordship, and was his panegyrist from that time. Alphonso took the reproaches made against him with a good grace. Father Villani informed him of some reports against him, and the following is the way in which Alphonso answered him: "As to the king's touching the diocese, I am obliged to you, because these admonitions are always good, and can never do harm; but I must beg you to remind me of this matter when we see each other again, that we may talk it over in private." He liked to be told of all that was said to his dispraise, and never hesitated to make amends if he found he had made a mistake. The same Father Villani wrote to tell him that he must be on his guard and not trust in others. "You must know," he answered, "that I no longer

trust in any one, not even myself; for the rest, it is impossible to close every body's mouth, and to prevent comments and murmurs."

There was a report that a priest in the diocese, whose reputation was far from good, had baptised a goat. This scandal was generally spread about, and not only the priest, but also his Lordship, was attacked in consequence, as it was pretended that he was unfit to govern the diocese. When Tramontana, the priest, informed him of this calumny, as well as of several acts of negligence of which he was accused at Naples, Alphonso replied, "As for the other things about which you have written to me, I thank you for what you say, because it serves to make me more humble and attentive. I will tell you however that these are all falsehoods. The affair of the goat has been mentioned here, but nothing has been able to be cleared up about it, and as to the priest who is named I have already banished him for other causes."

About this same time an idle person circulated a report through Naples, that they were much dissatisfied with Mgr. Liguori's government at Rome, in consequence of numerous complaints against him addressed to the Sovereign Pontiff, as well as to the sacred congregations. It was even added that the Pope was very far from rejoicing at having elected him to the bishopric of St. Agatha, for that he repented of his choice. This calumny grieved his Lordship's friends very much; as to him, when Father Villani informed him of it, he contented him-

self with replying thus: "You say that the accusation of which you speak may have been very probably made at Rome; I have heard nothing about it yet. For the rest, and as to the government, I do not know how I could have been more careful than I was. I always note down in writing all that has to be done for the present day and for the following one, and when any business connected with the diocese is in question, I leave everything to occupy myself about it. All belonging to my diocese may see this plainly; God will do the rest, but this will enable me to get my resignation more easily accepted."

By an inconsistency, which is a characteristic of falsehood, others accused him of governing with too much rigour; but Alphonso was certain of the good he had done, and cared equally little for being thought too lenient or too severe.

"Human respect," said Father Raphael de Ruvo, "could never succeed in influencing Mgr. Liguori." One day when he was at table with several gentlemen, amongst whom was Canon Clement de Montella, they said that people talked a great deal about a priest who as they alleged had been banished unjustly. This priest was guilty of several hidden offences, for which Alphonso felt constrained to recur to this punishment, without wishing to publish things against him which were unknown. When he heard that he was censured for it, he got out of the difficulty by a smile, and said nothing to exculpate himself. Canon Clement, who knew all about

it, was no less edified by the holy bishop's moderation, than by the charity with which he gloried in choosing God alone as the judge of his conduct.

Most frequently these wicked discourses only took place in the conversation of certain prelates who felt Alphonso's life a tacit and continual censure on their conduct, and wished to justify their own negligence by saying that his zeal was in excess, and if they perceived some little defects, that is to say, some little disadvantages, they hastened to magnify them, and perverted them by speaking of them, without mentioning what measures the saintly bishop took in order to remedy them. Others who could not cast blame on his conduct, boasted of their own, as if theirs were, if not better, at least as praiseworthy as Alphonso's. I will mention one instance amongst others with which I am familiar. On his Lordship's death I went to the house of one of these prelates, in order to get information about a miracle which had been wrought on one of his servants; our conversation turned on the moderation with which Alphonso treated those who served him, when the prelate immediately interrupted me, and said, "That is true, Mgr. Liguori's domestics were treated just as I treat mine." He thought he must make this observation because he had a number of servants. He attracted attention by the richness of his equipages, and was remarkable for the elegance of his appearance, never forgetting to wear town or country attire according to the

places he might visit. Such were pretty nearly all Alphonso's censors; as to the one of whom we have just spoken, he was too full of indifference about the miracle I came to inquire into, to give me any information about it.

Several people wondered at the great number of works which his Lordship published. Some even in the congregation, who only judged from afar, said in an under tone, that in the publication of his works Alphonso sought for an uncertain good to others, while he neglected the certain good he could have effected had he been exclusively engaged in the affairs of his diocese. Father Villani wrote to him that several amongst us could not approve of such a way of occupying himself; his Lordship replied, "In regard to the murmurs relative to my publications, I will say that the bishops who are most celebrated for their great zeal preached and published works while ruling over their dioceses; such as St. John Chrysostom, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose, St. Francis of Sales, Mgr. Sarnelli and others. I am always shut up during the winter, and converse with no one; besides every one avoids my conversation, because it is not agreeable. I pray three times a day, make an hour's thanksgiving after mass, as well as a spiritual lecture, at least when I am at liberty. After that I try to profit by all the time remaining to me, in labouring in things which seem useful."

Detraction found fresh matter whereon to feed in the expenses which all these publications caused; this reproach was no better founded than

the others, for if his Lordship made no profit on the works, he at least lost nothing by them. When he published a work, he had a few copies printed at Naples, that the impression might be made with exactness, and that he might be able to make the corrections himself; but he afterwards gave up the copy-right to Don Remondini of Venice, or to some other bookseller in Naples. He even allowed some bookseller of the capital to have the sole right over them, and for this purpose to procure the royal privilege; thus there was no loss, and all the profits which he reaped were given to the poor. "As to the books I have printed," he wrote to Father Villani, "I have been repaid for the expense; besides, they are books which are necessary to my diocesans, and except that against Patuzzi, all the others have been expressly composed for the ecclesiastics and confessors of the diocese, as the 'Way of Salvation,' and 'The Country Confessor,' which are of great use here." He had composed the "Instruction for Confessors" at this same time. "This Instruction," he adds, "I have also written for my diocese; and I can assure you that it is better than any I ever saw on the subject, as they are all full of frivolities, with the exception of one which is too long." It is thus that Alphonso justified his conduct, which also had the full sanction of the Sovereign Pontiff Clement XIII., whose approbation encouraged him in pursuing his labours, which were not only useful to his diocese but to the whole Church.

Notwithstanding all these remarks, Alphonso

did not at all slacken in his glorious career, and giving his pen no further rest was constantly planning new works. In one of his letters to Remondini of Venice, dated the 3rd of March, 1768, he says, "I have already written to tell you that I wished to have a little book called Reflections on the Faith printed, which is against a pamphlet by an anonymous Frenchman; but after much consideration, I have come to the conclusion that it is not fit to spread this little book through Naples in its present state; for this reason, as I cannot have it published here, I have thought it best to compose another on the same subject, against Justin Febronius, who attacks the same points as the French writer, although in a different manner. It must however be written in Latin, and on a different plan to the former; it will also be well to publish it under a fictitious name. I reckon on being able to labour at it constantly, because the book on the Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ is nearly done, and the printing is already begun. The book against Febronius will be small, and will not number more than nine or ten sheets at most. If you wish me to take the cost on myself, I shall be satisfied to do so, as I think that this work will be of great glory to God and a great good to the Church, now, as it were, trodden underfoot."

He published the "Way of Salvation" about this time, which is a work of great utility for all classes of men: it is divided into three parts; the first contains meditations for all seasons of

the year; the second, for divers times in particular; and the third contains a rule of life for a Christian, the practice of virtues and considerations on the love of Jesus Christ, entitled, "Darts of Fire."

CHAPTER XLII.

When Almighty God wishes to raise one of His servants to great sanctity, the usual course of His providence is to throw them into a sea of sorrow, so to speak. Alphonso, whom God had destined to be a shining pillar in the heavenly Jerusalem, was also obliged to pass through the crucible of tribulation.

In the sixteenth year of the century, the sixty-second of his age, and the seventh of his episcopate, on the 23rd of June, Alphonso was attacked by a fever which at first seemed so slight that it was believed to be only a cold; but it increased on the second and third day, and made such progress that it was taken for a dangerous putrid fever. When the doctors came to see him, his Lordship said to them in a cheerful tone, "Water and oil," and as he was asked what he meant by that, he answered, "That if the fever were putrid, as they thought, he would require iced-water, and extreme unction as a precaution in case of death."

However, the fever disappeared three days af-

terwards, and contrary to all expectation he was attacked by acute pains on the right side. The doctors called it a commencement of sciatica arising from rheumatic tendencies; in fact, he experienced constant pains in the bone of the thigh, these, however, were not very severe. As he had no fever, and his head was free, he never ceased to give audiences, or interrupted his scientific and spiritual occupations. He was full of solicitude for the wants of his diocese, and not being able to visit it himself, he sent his grand-vicar into the estates of Frasso and Arpaja, as well as to the village of Forchia. "I continue," he wrote to Father Villani, "to be tormented with internal pains in nearly one half of my body, and it seems as if the pain would fix in the hip bone. Blessed for ever be God for having sent me this suffering! I shall have difficulty in going out this year to make my accustomed visitation. They speak of my having blisters and cupping-glasses." He wrote to the same father on the 29th of July: "As to my illness, notwithstanding all the remedies which have been employed, I am just in the same state, and perhaps suffer even more from the sciatica. The doctors hardly know what to think; but I have resolved to let God do as He pleases, and to embrace suffering as He sends it to me." We see by this that he expected to regain sufficient strength to undertake the visitation of the most important places in the diocese. "In a few days," he goes on to say, "I shall go to St. Agatha to make my visitation there, and from

thence to the property of Durazzano." He had the will, but it was not to be done.

On the approach of the Assumption he tried to give the novena in the church of the Annunziata; notwithstanding his sufferings he succeeded in crawling to the pulpit; but the pain ere long seized him in a most violent manner, and fixed itself obstinately in the hip bone, so as to render it impossible for him to go on. The priest Nicholas Manucci, the Neapolitan missionary, had accompanied him there, and replaced him on the sixth day. From this time the malady made such progress that he no longer knew in what position to place himself, either by day or night. In spite of that, and as if some one else were suffering in his stead, he was unceasingly occupied about the affairs of his diocese while in bed; he dictated his works, and continued to perform with the members of his household all the accustomed exercises. "It is already six days since I said mass," he wrote to Naples on the 18th of August, to the priest Don Salvadore Tramontana, who was his confidant. "I have blisters on my legs, and thus would I remain during all the rest of my life, if such is God's good pleasure. Pray that God may give me a perfect submission to His will." On the 27th he wrote to him again, saying, "I continue to bear the cross of my infirmity; it will be twelve days to-morrow that I have been in bed; it will be fifteen on Monday since I celebrated mass, and I do not see any amelioration. I seem as if I had lost my stomach, but I am contented, because God wills it to be so."

However, the fever went on increasingly day by day, and his sufferings were so increased that fears were soon entertained for his life. When it was proposed to him to send for a doctor from Naples, he replied, "Do you then think that the doctors in Naples work miracles, or that they have studied different books to the doctors here? I am in the hands of God, and the doctors He has given me." An express was sent for Father Villani, and as he also wished to get Alphonso to call in a doctor of Naples, he received for answer that the doctors at Arienzo were worth as much as those of Naples. His two worthy doctors, Don Salvadore of Mauro and Don Nicholas Ferrara, were not however of the same opinion; for they sent for Father Villani and the grand-vicar Rubini, and said to them, "We do not wish to bear the responsibility of his Lordship's death; we want to have a consultation." The physician Don Francis Dolce was therefore summoned from Naples. Alphonso said nothing on seeing him, but his face betokened the suffering of his heart.

He affected every one while in this state by his ejaculations of love towards Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin. He showed great confidence in their merits, and seemed quite confounded at his own conduct, which he said had not corresponded to their goodness. One of our fathers was just going to begin saying mass, when he called him close to his bed, and said to him with a profound sentiment of humility, "Pray that God may deign to be merciful to-

wards me." Although he had confidence, he still trembled in thinking of the judgments of God. "Non intres in judicio cum servo tuo," he repeated, and "Fac cum servo tuo secundum misericordiam tuam."*

After receiving the last sacraments on August the 26th, 1768, he made his will. He would not have had matter for one if his steward had not received four hundred and twenty-three ducats some days before, arising from the rents belonging to him. He wished this sum to be deposited in the hands of the archpriest Romano, and fixed on the number of masses to be celebrated for him at Arienzo and at St. Agatha; he pointed out what alms he wished given to the poor, and ordered that the surplus should be distributed to all who were in his service, as a token of gratitude, two hours after his death; finally, he asked that his body should be taken to the cathedral of St. Agatha.

The inhabitants of this town manifested a degree of veneration for Mgr. Liguori which they had never done towards any of his predecessors in similar circumstances.

Arienzo is eight miles from St. Agatha. When the diocesans saw their bishop's life in such great peril, they agreed together, that after the celebration of the funeral office at Arienzo, the body should be carried to a neighbouring village, accompanied by all the clergy in their

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* "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord....Do unto Thy servant according to Thy loving mercy."

choir dress, and by all the confraternities, with lighted torches; that the clergy of this village should then accompany it to the next village, and so on until it reached the gates of St. Agatha; when the clergy, secular and regular, and confraternities of the town, were to come and meet the funeral procession, when they were all to repair to the cathedral to celebrate the obsequies with the greatest pomp.

But the fever visibly abated, although the sufferings were still very sharp. The pains caused by the rheumatism were violent and continual. He could find no position whereby he could lie in bed, so he got into an arm-chair though with great difficulty, where he remained nailed down by his suffering, as it were; it is easy to imagine the way in which he passed the nights and days, as he could neither move nor dress himself; his state forced us to shed tears of compassion. Father Villani adjusted a light covering of dark buckram in order to conceal the disordered state of his clothes. The rheumatism was constantly making fresh progress; its seat was at first confined to the hip bone, it soon reached the leg, and extended through the nerves of the limbs which caused a great increase of pain. The pious bishop bore it all with unalterable patience: no groan ever issued from his lips, but that which filled up the measure of admiration in regard to him was, that he never ceased to be still occupied in the affairs of his diocese.

During this extreme suffering he made such

lively aspirations to a large crucifix placed before him, that one of those who attended him could not help collecting a great portion of them. "Lord," said he, "I thank Thee for having given me some share in the sufferings Thou didst endure in Thy nerves, when Thou wert nailed to the cross. I wish to suffer, my Jesus, as Thou willest, and as much as Thou willest, only give me patience. 'Hic ure, hic seca, hic non parcas, ut in æternum parcas.' Unhappy damned ones!" he sometimes exclaimed, "how can you suffer without merit? My Jesus, my Hope, the only Remedy for all my ills!"

As if he were already in the arms of death, he exclaimed joyously, "Oh, how happy a thing it is to die fastened to the cross!" He was heard to exclaim in envy at the lot of the poor, "A poor person who loves God, dies more content than all the rich in the world. An hour of suffering is worth more than all the treasures of the earth." During the exhaustion caused by a long want of sleep, he said, "I should like to have a little sleep, but God does not will it, and I do not wish it either." He also said, looking sadly at his palliasse, which he could no longer enjoy, "Oh, my palliasse! thou art worth more for one day than all the thrones in the world."

But his sufferings did not end here. The rheumatism settled in the vertebræ of the neck, and his head was so bent forwards, and rested so much on his chest, that on looking at him from behind he appeared like a body without a head. "Nothing but a miracle," the doctor

Don Nicholas Ferrara said to me, "could have prevented this curvature from taking away respiration altogether."

But even this was only a part of his martyrdom. In consequence of this displacement of the head, his chin sunk down into the middle of his chest, and as his beard was strong and bristly, it caused a considerable wound there. However, this painful contact between the chin and the chest, prevented the sick man from being strangled, by constraining him always to turn his head towards the opposite side.

This wound could not be seen, and as his Lordship bore it without any complaint, it did not at first attract attention, but the humour, which was not long in issuing from it, soon caused the doctors to entertain the most lively fears; they wanted to raise his head to examine it, but Alphonso was obliged to raise his hand, for any force used in that direction, would have broken his neck. They then tried to place him on a sofa, in an horizontal position, and thus they were at length able to examine the wound. It was so deep and dangerous, that it had very nearly laid bare the bone of the chest. The doctors, however, succeeded in preventing mortification, and the wound was soon completely healed. He began to get better at the end of a few months, but the malignant humour settled on the nerves, the body was contracted, and his head rested on his chest during the rest of his life; he remained in this state during the seventeen years he lived after this.

During the course of this cruel malady, our saint evinced superhuman patience. He was not sad, on the contrary, he rejoiced to suffer, for he looked on himself as fastened on the cross with Jesus Christ. "We all admired such patience and courage," said Doctor Mauro, "it seemed as if the torments he endured acted on another body. Had he only had that horrible wound in the chest, what strength would he not have required to endure the disgusting effects of an ulcer which could not be attended to! I, who have attended him in all his maladies, and in this last which was so painful, can attest, with all truth, that he has borne everything with the greatest patience, without allowing the least murmur to escape, and always united to the Divine will, as if his sufferings had been those of another." "Mgr. Liguori," also said Father Raphael de Ruvo, the ex-provincial of the religious of St. Peter of Alcantara, "was a true picture of the saintly Job. Though having become, as it were, one mass of pains, he never opened his mouth to utter even the slightest complaint. One look raised up to heaven with some pious aspiration was the only sign of his suffering; he still expressed himself so calmly that he consoled and confounded me, as well as all who were present."

One of the first surgeons of the capital, who had witnessed his patience at Arienzo, said when speaking of this painful wound at Naples, "If I had had to endure such torments, I should have become frantic." He could not conceive

how his Lordship had been able to preserve unalterable serenity in the midst of such terrible sufferings.

At length the invalid was placed on a poor mattress, though it was with great pain, where he was in an uneasy and painful position. It was not without difficulty that they succeeded in putting on his cassock, and as he could not undress himself, he remained in this garb night and day, and in the same position. "That which made most impression on me, and which I admired most," said the grand-vicar Rubini to me, "was, that during the whole time of this sickness, which lasted at least for fifty days, he was always immoveable, full of invincible courage, and never showed the least impatience or the least wish for relief."

In all his pains Alphonso showed the truth of St. Augustine's words, that he who loves does not suffer, and wishes to suffer more. "He was fixed on his poor bed," said Don Benedict Barba, a canon of Avella, "once while I was arranging the sheets with Brother Francis Anthony, I saw that he had his large rosary by him, and that there were as many holes in his flesh as there were beads in it. As I attributed this to accident, I told Brother Anthony to take the rosary away. But he answered in a way which made me understand, that this servant of God was not satisfied with only bearing his infirmity, but sought to crucify himself still more."

His submission to the doctors was no less

admirable. "Let us obey them," he often said, "and resign ourselves to die." They had scarcely spoken before they were obeyed. Doctor Mauro asserts that the saintly patient always manifested the greatest obedience in taking any kind of remedy, however disagreeable it might be. As he had a very delicate body, blisters were most painful to him, but he never sought to be exempted from them. Doctor Ferrara in turn said that he was submissive to his doctors, not through the wish to prolong life, but because he recognized God's will in theirs. One day amongst others the saint said to him, "I am nothing but an old man now, what can I hope for, or aspire to? I obey in order to fulfil your will and that of God."

He was not only contented and serene, but he carried his heroism so far as to be quite joyous. One day when he received a visit from Doctor Ferrara, he said to him, "You endeavour to hold me up, by means of props and stays, but if you happen to put a new prop some day, and raise it up too much, all the rest will fall, and you will lose your trouble." The priest Don Thomas Aceti once asked him how he had passed the night: "I chase flies by day," replied he laughingly, "and I take spiders by night." Canon Barba came one day up to his bed-side: "There," said the sufferer, slightly moving his head, "that is the ne plus ultra, my head can do no more." Another time he said to him, "They have so often called me crippled, that I am caught at last." Although

reduced to this state of infirmity, he never dispensed himself from any of his exercises of piety. In the evening especially he wished all his household to come to his room, together with the grand-vicar, that they might all recite the rosary together, the Litanies of the Blessed Virgin, and the other accustomed prayers. He passed nearly the whole day in hearing some spiritual lecture, which was read to him alternately by Brother Francis Anthony and the other priests who attended him.

In this state of oppression and pain he never forgot his dear flock, on whom he never ceased to lavish all the care of a good shepherd; he dictated, ordered, and did everything as if he had been quite well. Thus he caused several noblemen to be written to touching the reform of abuses, and he addressed certain congregations at Naples, in order to obtain missionaries that year for all his diocese. On the 21st of November he wrote to Father Villani for a village which had not yet had any. "By the grace of God," said he, "I have regulated the missions for the whole diocese, and they have already been begun in four quarters; a fifth still remains where there is no mission: it is Lajano, a village about four or five miles from St. Agatha; the inhabitants are poor countrymen and simple people; I must therefore have two or three of our fathers at the least to give this little mission during the carnival, or at the latest during Lent, but should prefer its being in the carnival." Thus suffering did not in the

least diminish the activity of his zeal and his solicitude for his flock.

"That which most astonished me," said Canon Barba, "was that he not only never ceased to watch over and labour for the good of souls and the glory of Jesus Christ during this excess of suffering, but that he also did so beyond the bounds of the province." Having been informed that a bishop had been guilty of an abuse which was most prejudicial to souls, he hastened to dictate a letter, which he sent by an express, to inform him of his error, after which he turned towards me and said, "My dear Benedict, we are obliged mutually to aid each other."

As the bed of pain was not only an object of patience to Alphonso, but also an object of love, his sufferings did not prevent him from revising for the last time and publishing a great work which he entitled, "The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ." He manifests the sentiments of his heart in this book, in treating first of the love we owe to Jesus Christ, on account of the love He has shown towards us in His passion, and in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. He afterwards shows what great confidence we ought to have in Him; he then comments on the Apostle St. Paul's words, "Charitas patiens est," where he finds the characteristics of that true charity which tends to bind us more closely to Jesus Christ; after that he explains the methods to be employed during temptations, and the great benefits they procure for us; he ends by noticing the causes of spiritual desolation,

for the sake of holy souls, and the motives for bearing it with patience and courage. In the latter part of this work he comments on all the Passion of Jesus Christ after the writings of the sacred evangelists, and proposes divers practices of piety, in order to inflame us with Divine Love. Don Laurence Selvaggio said in speaking of this treatise, "Knowledge, piety, and zeal for the salvation of souls are especially to be discovered in this book. It everywhere breathes of the spirit of its pious author, shows the necessity and teaches the way of loving Jesus Christ our God, who ought to be the sole object of the affections of our heart, and to whom all the actions of our life should be referred."

The convalescence of the Bishop of St. Agatha was very painful and lasted more than a year. "I continue to be without fever," he wrote to Father Villani on the 8th of October, 1768, "but the pain is just the same. They make me walk about on crutches, supported however by two people, and this is the sixth day since I began to do this; but I do not see that it or the carriage does me any good. I am awake nearly every night; nature feels it; but I think that my will is resigned to that of God. Remember me during mass, that God may give me perfect resignation." He wrote to the same father on the 2nd of November: "I am in a state which renders me incapable of moving, and fever attacks me from time to time. However, my head is clear, and by God's grace I am cheerful and resigned." He wrote as follows to Don Remon-

dini of Venice, on the 9th of November: "I wrote to you that I was going to give the retreats to the clergy of Naples in November, but it has been God's will that I should go through a different kind of exercise since the beginning of August, and I shall continue it throughout all this winter. I have been suffering from pains in the nerves since August; I cannot walk, nor even move, without suffering. I am imprisoned in bed, but I thank God for sending me this trial." On the 8th of December, he also said to Father Stephen Longobardi, the superior-general of the Pious Workmen, "I continue to be in my shell without power of motion, and attacked by pains in every part of my body." He sent him a rosary at the same time, begging him to attach the indulgences of St. Briget to it.

Who could imagine that he continued to occupy himself in the general affairs of the Church, even in the midst of his sufferings, and that he was full of zeal in combating against her enemies! A learned man of Naples published a treatise against the authority of the Church, and particularly against her privileges. Alphonso felt that his mind was at liberty, and did not hesitate to enter into the lists. In a letter to Father Villani of the 11th of October, he said, "The pain continues just the same: fiat voluntas. I am impatiently expecting N.'s book; send it immediately, and by Naples; I say immediately." And in another letter he writes, "If you know of anything good on personal im-

munity, let me hear of it, and if you find a paper in the book" (it was the pamphlet of which we have before spoken, and which he had sent to Father Villani,) "whereon I have noted down several things touching this same book, send it back to me." I have kept the manuscript of this refutation, which he had only sketched out; he would have finished it but on account of several circumstances, and on the advice of Father Villani he did not think fit to put the finishing stroke to it. Alphonso's solicitude for the wants of the Church and of his diocese extended also to those of his congregation. He never omitted to answer all the letters he received from any of us, especially those from the houses in Sicily and from the state of Benevento. He even liked to be loaded with occupation; he wished to know all about the conduct of the divers members of his congregation, and he weighed their actions in the balance of the sanctuary. Father Villani informed him of the expulsion of one of them; he wished to know all particulars about it, and after he had examined into the faults alleged against him, he did not consider them sufficient, so he answered on the 2nd of November: "In order to justify the expulsion of a subject, it requires to have well-grounded reasons for it, and they must be of a nature to preclude any compassion, if all hope of amendment is gone." I myself applied to him to obtain the expulsion of a lay-brother, when he replied to me: "After a subject has been received as a novice, there must be weighty

reasons to expel him, and when he has been allowed to make his profession, there must be very important ones, added to incorrigibility, in order not to commit a mortal sin in sending him away."

During his convalescence he composed and published a treatise on the ceremonies of the mass. In the first part he expounded most clearly the rubrics which one is bound to observe, and when a mass is curtailed so far as to become a grievous sin. In the second he urged upon them the duty of making that preparation and thanksgiving which are required by so august a mystery.

About this time, and whilst he was on the point of bringing out this treatise, he received a dissertation against the fees for masses, which was written in an angry spirit and published at Naples. The author, who wished to abolish masses and the ecclesiastical state altogether, pretended to demonstrate the great disorders, as he said, the sins of simony, the sacrileges, and the scandals which result from the retribution which priests receive for masses. The whole dissertation breathes of the poison of Jansenism. The author proposes in conclusion, as the only method of putting an end to so many abuses and sacrileges, that paid masses (as he terms them,) should be abolished, and that the custom of the primitive ages should be recurred to, of having but one mass celebrated by the bishop or a priest nominated by him, at which the people should assist. He also wished the oblations to be

made, as formerly, through the medium of the priest and for the wants of the poor and of the Church. His Lordship zealously took up arms, and published a learned reply on the 15th of December of the same year 1768, in which he refutes the impious doctrine of the anonymous author by the true Catholic doctrine. He added this refutation to the treatise we have spoken of above, of which it forms the third part. Don Lawrence Selvaggio especially admired the learning which his Lordship evinced in this little book, and also his spirit of piety and his attachment to religion.

CHAPTER XLIII.

When his Holiness Pope Clement XIII. passed to a better world, Alphonso, though bent down by infirmities, never ceased to pray ardently that God would deign to grant a worthy pastor to His Church. He immediately enjoined that the prayer "Pro elegendo summo Pontifice," should be recited in his diocese, and he recommended this matter to all who came to see him. "After God," said he, "is the Pope. What confusion should we not be in, if we had no Pope! The Pope is the only person who manifests the will of God to us, and puts our consciences at rest." When Clement XIV. ascended the pontifical throne on the 19th of May, 1769, Alphonso rejoiced greatly, on hearing that the elec-

tion had fallen on a prelate who was so full of knowledge and zeal. In spite of all the sufferings which did not cease to come upon him, he succeeded in finishing a work on Dogmatics, which was extracted from the Council of Trent, and against the pretended Reformers, and he hastened to dedicate it to the newly-elected Pontiff. "The election of your Holiness to the throne of St. Peter," said he to him, "causes a general rejoicing throughout the whole Catholic universe; but I do not know that any one has felt greater consolation than I have done in considering the excellent qualities possessed by your Holiness, to wit, your knowledge and prudence, your detachment from the things of the earth, and above all, your piety and zeal for our holy religion." He says that he composed this work, at the age of sixty-three years, for no other reason than to show more clearly the truth and holiness of the dogmas of the Catholic Church, as now defined by the Council of Trent, against the pretended Reformers.

All Naples wondered how Alphonso had been able to apply to such profound studies, while a prey to such innumerable sufferings, and nearly in the arms of death. This work was one of singular merit, and was applauded even beyond the borders of Italy. The Pope received with pleasure this new mark of the zeal of the indefatigable bishop in propagating the knowledge of true religion amongst unbelievers, as well as of morality amongst Catholics, to whom he also showed what attachment they owe to the holy

faith they profess. The Pope manifested his satisfaction to him, and thanked him kindly in a brief, of which we regret that we are not in possession.

In this work the pious writer combated Peter Soave, otherwise called Paul Sarpi, who made such attempts to throw discredit on the authority of the Council of Trent in his pestilential writings. Alphonso, after having clearly exposed the errors of the innovators, refutes them, answers their objections, and triumphantly demonstrates the dogmas of the Catholic Church. "In this work," he wrote on the 13th of March, 1769, to Father Don Stephen Longobardi, "I only treat of the dogmatical points of faith defined by the Council, and not even of the history of this Council, as Pallavicini has done; so that my book contains a good quantity of dogmatics, as I have not only there spoken of the difficulties which were agitated in the Council, but I have set forth the doctrine of the authors in each treatise. I have also added other points of distinct theology, such, for example, as the manner in which grace acts in us, where I point out nearly all the systems of the schools on efficacious and sufficient grace. I have further added a very useful treatise on the infallibility of the Church, on the rules of the faith, and the necessity of an infallible judge, which is the most powerful method of converting heretics, who find some answer to everything but this. In fine, I have also subjoined two treatises or appendices, one on the manner in which grace operates in

the conversion of a sinner, and the other on the obedience which is due to the definitions of the Church, which are the rules of our faith." The learned canon Don Joseph Simioli, calls this work "a production of the mind, and still more of the heart."

As afflictions are sisters, they always go together; thus in addition to all these anxieties and sufferings, Alphonso's heart was also oppressed by still further sorrows. Our congregation had prospered wonderfully in Sicily up to this period; the brothers of St. Mary d' Itra, who had once refused their church to the Jesuit fathers, yielded it up to us with pleasure; we had also the use of the valuable library at Cento, which was worth more than one hundred thousand ducats, with an annual allowance for the librarian. All this was the work of Mgr. Lucchesi. Besides the diocese of Girgenti, the missionaries were welcomed in that of Messina, where Mgr. Ventimiglia was bishop; we met with a similar reception at Cefalu from Mgr. Castelli and from Mgr. San-Severino in the diocese of Palermo. The bishops of Syracuse and of Mazzara also wished to have us, but we were not sufficiently numerous to satisfy them. At Palermo the Fathers of the Oratory offered to give us the church of the Ecce-Homo. The inhabitants of the territory of the Grottos made most urgent entreaties on this subject to Alphonso, and the prince Coto of St. Margarita was so desirous of it that he immediately commenced the work. Mgr. Lucchesi was greatly

rejoiced at seeing the missionaries so popular, and he neglected nothing whereby he could render them permanently established.

All this prosperity, which consoled us, caused the bishop of St. Agatha to reflect seriously. "If the works of God," said he, "are not contradicted, they are not well-rooted." He wrote several times to Father Don Peter Blasucci, saying, "I am rejoiced at the progress of our congregation in Sicily, and am much comforted by it; but this universal applause makes me tremble."

But soon Almighty God, who willed that he should go through a martyrdom of mind as well as of body, permitted a furious storm to be raised up against his dear children in Sicily. The only relief he experienced in the midst of his tribulations, was from the conversion of a great number of souls, which resulted from the labours of our missionaries in that island; but God willed that he should also be deprived of this consolation."

From the month of February in the year 1767, a perfidious Jansenist gloried in accusing us to the viceroy, Don Deodatus Targiani, as men of corrupted morals, as followers of the Jesuits, and as relaxed probabilists. The calumny was a dangerous one, and the missionaries began only to be spoken of as men unworthy of their position. However, we justified ourselves with so much energy and force, that the undeceived minister replied as follows, to Father Peter Blasucci, on the 10th of April: "Being animated by zeal and a true desire to avenge the Gospel from the

injuries and outrages it has received from men whose reasonings have followed no other guide than human philosophy, I declared myself against the companions of your Reverence, who had been denounced to me as miserable casuists; now that I am convinced of the contrary, I experience unspeakable pleasure, and I offer to concur in furthering the instruction of those who require it, and in supporting the pastors of souls."

In October, 1768, Mgr. Lucchesi passed to a better world, and the Prince of Campo-Franco declared himself his heir, ab intestat, and pretended that the hundred ounces annually which had been assigned to us by the defunct bishop, for the work of the missions and for their maintenance, were not validly given, because the capital did not proceed from the revenues of the bishopric, but from the inheritance of his uncle, General Lucchesi, and that besides that, the missionaries had not power to make acquisitions. He in consequence sought to establish the validity of his claims at Naples, and with the Jesuit assembly at Palermo; they proceeded to sequester the revenues, and the members of our congregation there, on finding themselves without provisions, had begun preparations for leaving Sicily. The tidings of this sad reverse reached Alphonso during the very height of his cruel malady; he was deeply affected, but he did not allow himself to be cast down by it. "I have received the disastrous news which you give me in your letter of October, 1768," he wrote to Father Blasucci, "but I say wrongly, for nothing

that God wills can be disastrous. He wishes to mortify us; may His name be praised for ever. I especially beg you not to lose confidence in Jesus Christ. If you are turned out of your house, try and procure another, where you may be able to remain. It will not do to yield so soon, on the contrary, you must persevere till God shows you that He no longer wills you to be at Girgenti. There will be fewer missions, but you will not lack a morsel of bread to keep up life. Wait and see what the deputies will do, what will be done by the new bishop, and, above all, what God's will may be. I believe that God does not will the destruction of this house. I continue to have no use of my body from head to foot, but I am contented; I bless God, and thank Him for having given me peace and patience." He wrote as follows to Father Villani on the 21st of October: "May God's good pleasure be done in regard to the house at Girgenti; if He no longer wishes it to exist, praised be His name! the good it has already done is sufficient."

Alphonso saw that his moral theology on the subject of the work of the missions was also attacked about this time, so he sent a letter to the bishop of Sicily, to justify his doctrine. He also represented the true state of things to that learned and devoted man the Marquis of Fogliani, the viceroy of Palermo, and implored his protection. They both in reply did justice to his merit, and eulogised his virtue and knowledge; but a new misfortune, and one more painful than

the first, increased our alarm as to the fate of our brothers in Sicily.

Mgr. Lanza, a learned and pious Theatine of the house of the Princess of Trabbia, succeeded Mgr. Lucchesi in the chair of Girgenti. This worthy bishop, who felt the most tender interest in his seminary, discovered a traitor there, who possessed the heart of a wolf under the exterior of a sheep, and sought to corrupt both the morals and doctrine of this holy spot. He was a chaplain belonging to the cathedral, and a professor of the Holy Scriptures. He gloried in publishing amongst the theologians that the Jansenists were the true disciples of St. Augustine. He commented on Quesnel's "Moral Reflections on the New Testament," in the most advantageous manner. He said that the holy Roman Church was contrary to St. Augustine, and that in condemning the doctrine of Quesnel, the doctrine of St. Augustine and the Holy Fathers was condemned also; and that the bull Unigenitus was impious. He eulogised the French prelates, who had asked for an appeal to a future council against the Pope. He asserted that the Roman Church had fallen into error through the means of the heretical Jesuits, as he called them; finally, he also maintained, with Michael Baius, that all the actions of infidels are so many sins. Mgr. Lanza no sooner heard of these blasphemies than he dismissed the professor of the seminary, suspended his faculties as a confessor, and forbade him to have access to the illustrious monastery of the Benedictines of Citeaux, where he had till then been the director.

Mgr. Lanza had the greatest esteem for our missionaries; he was already prepossessed in their favour by his brother, the Prince of Trabbia, who had been able to appreciate their zeal and their talents in his fief of Muzzomele. From the time of his arrival at Girgenti, he chose Father Peter Blasucci for his confessor and theologian. The chaplain, who was full of confusion, and whose reputation was lost, thought that this blow could only have come to him through the means of the missionaries. The suspicion appeared to have some foundation, but it was not so. The masters of the seminary and the pupils had themselves complained of him, as soon as they found out the poison he wished to disseminate. Not being able to lay the blame on the bishop, he thought he had better turn his weapons against the missionaries, and as his own downfall had befallen him on account of his doctrine, he tried to accuse that held by us. He won over several important personages to his party; after having obtained fourteen certificates he went to Palermo in the February of 1769, and presented himself to the royal junta of the presidents, and above all to the viceroy Deodatus Targiani, as having been persecuted by the missionaries. The least of his calumnies was that of designating us as corrupt probabilists as to morals, and as Molinists in dogmatics. He complained to the viceroy of having been unjustly expelled from the seminary, calumniated and persecuted by the missionaries on account of his opposition to the doctrines which they had spread to the pre-

judice of souls and of the state. With these deadly preparations and with the support of his partisans, he already had begun to flatter himself with the certainty of a triumph, and chanted the song of victory before the battle had commenced.

Mgr. Lanza was greatly distressed at our being accused of professing evil doctrines and treated as if guilty of crime, and he hastened to represent to the viceroy how unjust and slanderous these reports were, and to inform him at the same time of the errors of the plaintiff, which were rendered public through his obstinacy. He then stated the soundness of the doctrine which we professed to the viceroy as well as to the supreme junta, and also the abundant fruit which was produced by our missions, and the great edification which we gave by our exemplary conduct, strengthening his assertions by the attestations of all the vicars and curates of the diocese, as well as by those of the Dominican and Augustinian fathers. Calumny tarnishes what it cannot blacken; thus at Palermo some judged well of us, others ill, and several hesitated, being embarrassed by the falsehoods alleged against us. These divers sentiments engendered such a confusion, and things took such an inauspicious aspect, that the suppression of our house and the departure of the missionaries began to be talked of. As these rumours spread throughout Girgenti as about to become realized, the whole town began to mourn; pious persons unceasingly interceded with God for us; some

mortified themselves and fasted on bread and water in order to avert such a calamity; many distributed abundant alms, and caused a great number of masses to be celebrated. Father Stephen Drago was not so fearful; he was a man of great sanctity, who had been several times at Palermo as prefect of the house of the Fathers of the Oratory, he sympathised with our difficulties, and encouraged the missionaries to patience. On the morning of Holy Tuesday he said to our Father Don Gaetan Mancusi, in order to encourage him, "Believe me, you will not lose the house of Girgenti, and that because of the prayers of Mgr. Liguori. Continue to be firm; God will change ignominy into glory, and your congregation, after these first obstacles are surmounted, will be more honoured than before."

About this same time another holy soul, who had recommended our congregation to God, but who was however ignorant of the distress in which we then were, saw in spirit a little column standing up without a pedestal, and seeming ready to fall at the least breath; at the same time she also saw a great fire blaze up in all the houses of the congregation, which threatened to reduce them to ashes. At the sight of such a spectacle this person was filled with terror, and heard words which told her that the little column was the house of Girgenti, to which a pedestal was going to be added to render it immoveable; that the fire which exercised its ravages in the houses of the congregation was a dangerous storm with which it was menaced:

she however saw the fire go out by degrees, and the houses were thus saved from this impending calamity: a pedestal was placed beneath the column, and the fire, which equally prefigured a general discord amongst the members of the congregation, was also done away with. The vision referred to several different events, and was completely verified in the end.

When Alphonso was informed of all these vicissitudes, he adored the depth of the judgments of God, and never ceased to urge us to be humble and respectful towards all, to keep silence and to be patient. He however wished the truth to be manifested, but, as he repeated several times, without injuring those who had shown such perfidy in our regard. Father Mancusi showed great distress in the recital which he made to him of these calumnies, because they attacked our reputation: "Your Reverence seems much afraid," replied Alphonso; "for me, I put all my trust in God, who will protect us, as He has always protected the holy Church, which has also been persecuted throughout all ages. Let us act as we ought towards God, and God will comfort us."

However, the storm became more and more threatening, and Father Blasucci feared that he and his companions would become a prey to it; he therefore presented an energetic and sincere explanation to the Viceroy Targiani, in favour of the doctrine of Alphonso and that of the missionaries. Don Targiani was undeceived by this report as well as by those he had received

from others, and he replied to him on the 3rd of March, 1769, saying, "As to what you tell me of the suspicion you entertain that the priest N. has perhaps altered the good opinion I entertain of your Reverence and your companions by disadvantageous reports, I declare that I have never attempted to condemn any one, nor to judge any one to be guilty of holding false doctrine until the alleged error of doctrine has been verified to me. You may therefore be assured on the score of my indifference in regard to this report, and if I have spoken in favour of N. it has only been from the supposition that he was unjustly persecuted on account of his doctrine. In conclusion, as regards myself, I can only say that I am always rejoiced when I hear the pure doctrines of the Christian religion preached, in conformity to the maxims of the Gospel, of the Holy Fathers, and of the Church."

This apology, by disabusing the viceroy and the other ministers of the monarchy, also reached the chaplain, although unintentionally. When he saw that he was no longer looked upon with as much consideration as before, he had recourse to a new scheme, and presented an anonymous address full of horrible impostures. The accusation made no impression, for the very reason of its being anonymous, but it was principally rejected on account of the hatred it betrayed. When Alphonso was informed of it he hastened again to defend his sons and his morals before the viceroy and the prelates of Sicily.

When he was certain that this scheme and

these calumnies had failed, he returned thanks for it to God, but as he saw that his sons were wanting in courage he encouraged them by writing to them as follows: "You see that Jesus Christ protects us most lovingly against the attacks of hell. Let us therefore ever thank Him as well as our blessed mother, who keeps us under her special protection. I am certain that God has protected this mission, and will protect it for the future. I feared some disaster through the anonymous accusation; but I repeat once more, I now see that God protects us."

As he had it much at heart that the observance of the rule should be strictly kept up in the house, and that the subjects should preserve a spirit of charity amongst themselves, he adds, "I enjoin you all to observe the rule, and above all, to preserve concord amongst each other. Remember that we are surrounded by enemies who wish to destroy us, as well at Naples as at Girgenti; if we sin against God, we shall soon see the consummation of our ruin. May God protect this mission which is so advantageous to souls. Let us pray, but let us also be resigned: if God wills, or rather, if He permits this work to be destroyed, fiat voluntas....."

In another letter, dated September 8th, and of the same year, 1769, he said, "I continue to be paralysed and to be in bed, without power to move, and I am in constant pain. But God in His mercy knows how to make me contented by the thought of its being a great grace for me. I thank Him for it, but do not cease to pray Him

to give me perfect resignation. By God's mercy my head is free, I feel well, and do not neglect the least thing; I enter on my seventy-fourth year this month; do not omit to recommend me to Jesus Christ every morning, but do so in a special manner at mass, in order that I may have a happy death, which cannot be far distant." Returning again to the difficulties of the mission, he goes on to say, "I have the mission at Girgenti much at heart, on account of the great good it effects; but now I see it in danger of falling. This affair has kept me in a state of affliction thoughout all my last illness. The devil cannot bear it, but we must do all we can to uphold it, and then abandon it into the hands of God, who loves it better than we do."

CHAPTER XLIV.

We have admired the patience with which our saint endured the tedious sufferings of a painful illness, and the energy with which he surmounted it and devoted himself to the cares of his government, the labours of controversy, and the spiritual exercises which he had been in the habit of performing; we shall find equal reason to admire the mode of life he adopted, as soon as his state became less painful. He forgot his infirmities and sufferings, and laboured as if he had been healthy and robust, without

intermitting any of his penances. He generally only took five hours' sleep. The mattress he was obliged to use was nothing but a miserable covering a few inches thick, and as he did not allow it to be shaken it was just like a board. Fastened down to this painful bed he was ready for everything, he occupied himself about his diocese, and listened to and satisfied every one.

In the morning, after having finished a half-hour prayer, he made his preparation for holy communion, which he never omitted, and assisted at the mass which was celebrated by his secretary. After his thanksgiving, which was a very long one, he recited the canonical hours, although with great difficulty, and in the course of the day he performed all his other exercises of private devotion at their appointed hours.

Let us listen to the priest Gaetan Mancusi, who at that time was a member of our congregation, and is now the rector of the seminary of Potenza: "On my return from Sicily, where I have made a sojourn of ten years, I found his Lordship just the same as he was formerly; there was just the same sanctity and the same devotion. He made a meditation three times a day; he took half an hour's rest after dinner, which was his only repast; he then performed his spiritual reading, paid a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and recited vespers and compline; after that he gave audience and began to study. Although he was paralytic he did not cease to practise works of mercy, and to remain occupied from morning to night without losing a

single moment." In fact, he lay on his little bed surrounded by books, and occupied without any intermission until midnight, and often when we brought him a miserable collation of a little milk, or even of nothing but water, he only took it with his watch in his hand.

In a letter which he himself wrote to Joseph Remondini of Venice, on the 21st of August, 1769, he said to him, "I try not to lose time, and I am expecting death from day to day. I have already received the viaticum four times, and extreme unction twice. I will not fail to pray for you, both as regards your health, and the prosperity of your affairs, but especially for the one grand matter, your eternal salvation."

This constant zeal and application filled us all with admiration and astonishment. "We may well compare him to the most learned and devoted bishops of antiquity," said Archdeacon Rainone. Father Caputo also wrote to me, saying, "Mgr. Liguori was a true copy of the primitive bishops of Christianity, who had not only the good of the souls entrusted to their care at heart, but who at the same time anxiously laboured for the whole Church by their writings. This line of conduct on his Lordship's part filled every one with admiration, and as a venerable ecclesiastic of Naples said, "If it has been said of St. Jerome that he triumphed over his maladies by not ceasing to read and write, 'perpetua lectione ac scriptione superabat,' if there is reason to marvel at seeing all that St. Gregory has

written, although he was infirm and in bad health, 'infirma et ægra valetudine,' Mgr. Liguori ought to excite still more admiration on account of the numerous labours to which he devoted himself when in a worse state than St. Jerome or St. Gregory ever were."

Those who took the greatest interest in him personally, were pained at seeing such great application, and thought that he would thereby abridge his days; they applied to Father Villani to get him in his capacity of director to moderate it; but when he spoke to him of it, our saint justified himself mildly, and replied, "I do not think that I ought to remain idle. I could employ myself in reading without dictating, but my head would gain nothing by that. When I have read for twenty minutes or half an hour at most, I can do no more; besides I do not neglect my devotions; I pray in the morning and evening, in addition to the visit to the Blessed Sacrament. My thanksgiving still lasts for an hour, and I make my spiritual reading for half an hour; but there are many days which are entirely taken up by the affairs of my diocese, and while the visitation which I have commenced continues all the writings must slumber. I have been anxious to enter into all these details with your Reverence, in order to obtain your blessing." On another and a later occasion, when Father Villani insisted on his taking care of himself, he replied to him in July, 1774, "Do not be afraid, because as far as the new work is concerned I do not fatigue myself; I write a

little bit every now and then only, I go out in the mornings and evenings, and always take my usual walk. I have undertaken this work by way of relaxation, in doing thus I only follow the advice you gave me; believe me, it is a real relaxation to me, although it may be at the same time a useful one, on account of the numerous and interesting extracts I have collected during the nine months I have been at work at it. By God's mercy, I feel well; but sixty-eight years is a heavy infirmity." One may see by these few words where his soul is depicted, that he thought of everything except the sufferings which encompassed him.

He prolonged his audiences and occupations until the last moment, without taking a moment's relaxation, and he never stopped except when his food was brought to him; but to take nourishment caused him extreme pain, he experienced the greatest difficulty in introducing anything like food into his mouth, and could only drink by means of a quill. It was suggested to him to get a silver pipe made; he negatived the idea with horror; at first he only made use of a wooden pipe, but the use of coffee and other hot drinks caused several of them to split. One of our lay-brothers having manufactured another sort of pipe of turned iron, our brother Francis Anthony soon had it thrown away because the rust destroyed it, although Alphonso did not complain of it. Application was at length made to the silversmith Dominic Porpora of Arienzo, who made one of silver,

but he was obliged to pretend that it was of some other metal.

He was distressed at first at not being able to visit his cherished sick, however he supplied his place by priests and divers ecclesiastics. When he was informed of the misery of any of the poor people, he never neglected to supply what they might require by means of brother Francis Anthony or his servant Alexis. He wished to know about the state of those in greatest suffering day by day, and what they required in regard to food and medicine. On hearing that sister Mary Catharine, a poor cloistered nun, had met with an accident which had obliged her never to leave her chair, although she could still sew and knit stockings, his Lordship assigned her an assistance of five carlines a month.

God also aided him in the exercise of his charity, and several sick persons were cured through his prayers. Father Joseph Morgillo, of the congregation of Pious Workmen, happened to be at Arienzo, and was descending a mountain where his friends had induced him to take a walk, when he fell and broke his leg: the bone was reset, but the operation did not succeed, and he was for ten days in great suffering and unable to take any rest. When Alphonso heard of his sad state, he sent one of his servants to him with a little picture of the Blessed Virgin, telling him to have confidence in her, and that he would obtain his cure. The father placed the picture on his face, saying, "My Queen! by the merits of Mgr. Liguori, deliver me from this

torment," and he was cured that very instant. Father Morgillo honoured this little picture as long as he lived, as a relic of the blessed bishop from whom he had received it.

He sold his carriage during the time of the scarcity, as we have already said, and had not since thought of procuring another, but the doctors, on seeing his body so paralyzed, and his mind so devoted to study, ordered him to take a daily drive, in order to preserve a remnant of life. Although he was always anxious to follow their advice, he manifested indifference about it this time, and when the doctors and his own household insisted upon it, he answered, "What is the use of these drives? I am well enough as I am, and I do not suffer. The money which a carriage and horses would cost me ought to be employed by me in relieving the poor." On seeing however the real necessity there was of his having it, Brother Francis Anthony and others resolved to buy him a poor sort of carriage, which, together with the horses, caused an expense of a hundred and thirteen ducats. At first he was told that it was a present from his brother Don Hercules, but when he knew how it was, he complained to Brother Tartaglione for having caused so much expense for these things. "You could have economised more," he wrote to him, "by buying a carriage and horses of an inferior quality." He also wished the horses to be treated and equipped in a manner conformable to his condition, that is to say, as poorly as possible; so his drives af-

forded great diversion to the gentlemen of Arienzo: "An old bishop," said they, "an old coachman, an old carriage, and old horses."

These drives, although ordered for him under the idea of relieving him, often ended in being most painful to him. If the carriage met with any shock by coming in contact with a stone, or from any other cause, it was a martyrdom to Alphonso, whose head was as if it were dislocated by each jolt. One evening when he was going through the street of the Crisci, one of the wheels met with such a shock that the spokes were all scattered about, the carriage was upset, and it was a miracle that his Lordship was not killed by the blow. Brother Anthony and the servant lifted him up in their arms with great difficulty, but as they were not able to bear such a weight for long at a time, they were obliged to put him down on the road at intervals; some poor women who were going home perceived him, and in compassion lent him a chair. On other occasions a shaft or some other part of the harness broke, when his Lordship had to wait in the middle of the street until it was mended. One of the horses had a singular habit; after having gone through various contortions of the head, he suddenly went down, and did not get up again until after having been pulled by the ears for a long while. Several times Alphonso was obliged to get out of the carriage into the middle of the road, and to remain there patiently, if he could not be dragged to the palace, supported by those who were with him.

The incapacity of the coachman multiplied these accidents, for he either did not see what was in the way, or else not knowing how to avoid it, he ran up against something or other at every step. His Lordship was the only one who did not appear to suffer, and he never thought of changing the horses, or carriage, or the coachman. At the beginning he went out in the mornings and evenings by the order of the medical men. "I am better," he wrote on Saturday, 9th of December, 1769, to his brother Hercules, "I have preached this evening; I take a little drive every morning, and that is a great relief to me." It was in this same letter that he thanked his brother for his charity in giving him the carriage and horses, as at that time he believed himself indebted to him for them.

At a later period he only took his drive in the evenings about six o'clock, and always in the country, to avoid the frequent meetings which interrupted him when driving through the town. Every instant was precious to him, and in order to lose as little time as possible, he no sooner was seated in the carriage than he began to recite an Ave to the Blessed Virgin, three Gloria Patri in honour of his patron saints, and a De Profundis for the souls in purgatory. He then had the life of some saint or some other book on ecclesiastical matters read to him; as he was a little deaf they were obliged to be read in a very loud tone of voice. He most frequently went to St. Mary de Vico, visited the Blessed Sacrament there, and excited the people to fervour by some

holy exhortation. When he left the church he re-opened his book, and did not close it again until he re-entered the palace court.

After he had gone on with this regimen for nearly two years, and found benefit from it, he became scrupulous about the expense which the horses and coachman cost, and earnestly begged that the carriage might be sold in order that its value might be distributed among the poor. The vicar-general, the doctors, and all his household united in representing to him the absolute necessity there was for his going out, and the impossibility of his going in any other way. These representations were useless, or moved him but little: to decide him it was necessary to refer the matter to his director, and he only yielded to the command of Father Villani. When six o'clock had struck, and he had made a meditation of half an hour with his household, he recited matins and lauds with his secretary, and then resumed his studies. When his Lordship became paralytic, it may truly be said, that he was even more occupied than before his painful infirmity; his refection in the evening generally consisted of nothing but lemonade, a little coffee, or a small quantity of milk. All his household assembled together about nine o'clock, and recited the rosary and night prayers together. The grand-vicar then went to supper with the rest, while his Lordship, especially in summer, kept his watch open before him, and prolonged his studies until midnight. "I have witnessed the long sufferings of the saint," said our Father

Buonopane, "and I have admired his marvellous and truly Christian modesty; this appeared in things almost too undignified to be related; when, for example, he went to bed at night he took off his under-garments himself, and after he had got into bed with great pain he had his stockings pulled off underneath the clothes."

Mass was the only thing wanting in the life of Mgr. Liguori. "God wills that I shall not say mass; His will be done!" said he one day to the priest Don Salvadore Tramontana. This privation, and it was the one Alphonso felt the most, lasted for two years, during which time he had been obliged to be satisfied with receiving holy communion from the hands of the priest whose mass he heard. When Father Marcorio, afterwards the prior of the Convent of St. Augustine, came to see him on Saturday the 16th of August, 1770, he invited him to preach on the following Sunday in his church on the occasion of the Feast of the Girdle; Alphonso promised to do so, and while he was conversing with him, he expressed amongst other things the pain which he felt in being unable to celebrate the holy mysteries. Father Marcorio was moved at his distress, and told him that necessity dispensed him from the less essential parts, and that by placing himself on a chair he could easily take the Precious Blood. Alphonso received this advice with a transport of joy, and tried to put it in practice, and after two or three attempts he had the exceeding consolation of celebrating on the follow-

ing day. After vespers he went to preach at St. Augustine's, and could not cease thanking him who had suggested such a happy expedient. On the same day he imparted his satisfaction to us. "To-day, the 27th of the month," he wrote to Father Villani, "I have recommenced saying mass, and I hope that I shall be able to continue to do so. All the difficulty was in taking the Precious Blood, but we have contrived a method which has perfectly succeeded: Gloria Patri. I am going to deliver a sermon to-day in a church where they will be a great concourse of people, that is to say, in the church of the Fathers of St. Augustine." On the 9th of December, he wrote to Father Nicholas Sapio at Palermo: "I celebrate mass every day, I go out in the carriage when it is fine, and I go on with divers works when I am free from business in regard to my bishopric." From this time he celebrated mass every day, and obtained permission from Rome to celebrate that of the Blessed Virgin at all times.

He was exact in observing all the rubrics, and never wished to dispense even with those which are the least essential. The most painful to him were the genuflexions, and he therefore took great care to make them, bending the knee until it touched the predella; but when he wished to raise it again, it fell heavily back, and he only succeeded in standing up again by the aid of another person. In a letter which he wrote to Father Villani on the 1st of September, he said, "By God's mercy, I continue to say mass, but I

do so with much difficulty, and when I have said it I am quite exhausted and in a perspiration." The canon, Don James Morgillo, has attested, that when he served at his Lordship's mass, it seemed to him as if he saw an angel at the altar, and when he prepared to take the Precious Blood, his face became inflamed like that of a man ravished out of himself. He heard the mass of the chaplain or some other priest for his thanksgiving, sitting down, but when the priest pronounced the words "Et Incarnatus est," in the Credo, his Lordship filled with compunction fell to the ground, and remained there bending profoundly; he did the same thing at the consecration, and each time he required assistance in sitting down again.

During the two years when Alphonso did not say mass, he never forgot his people, but had mass celebrated for them by our Father Don Carmin Fiocchi, the superior of the house of Ciorani; and for the other masses which he had to celebrate, he sent the fees to our Fathers of St. Angelus of Capoli.

Such was his Lordship during all the remaining time of his episcopacy; he retrenched none of his austerities nor of his labours. He was insensible to his own infirmities, but all alive to those of the persons who lived with him; our Father Fabius wrote to me from Arienzo on this subject about the month of July, 1773: "Such a mode of life and such great regularity fatigue me greatly, although I am only thirty-three; his Lordship on the contrary always appears to be

fresh, full of ardour, and refuses all attention." This also filled Canon Rubini, his grand-vicar, with astonishment, as he has many times asserted.

CHAPTER XLV.

When the serious illness under which Alphonso had laboured, and the state in which he still was became known, the diocese of St. Agatha became an object of compassion. Every one thought that in this state his Lordship would only be able to attend to himself, and could no longer be occupied about the interests of his Church, or at least could not watch over them as formerly; but they were mistaken. He was in the full enjoyment of all his intellectual faculties, he gave audiences, reflected on every thing, and gave his orders accordingly. The priest Tramontana informed him of the reports which were current about him, and he said in reply on the 5th of October, 1769, "As to the care of my diocese, my dear Salvadore, I do not know what more I could do; I do not slumber, and leave nothing undone. I promptly give all the advice and reprimands which are necessary. But it is impossible to shut the mouths of all the discontented. There are nine priests whom I keep in banishment at present. Except in the affairs of the council,

for which I depend on two curates, of whom one is here and the other at St. Agatha, everything passes through my hands, but while I pull out the thorns on one side, they shoot up at the other. I beg you to recommend me to Jesus Christ, in order that He may give me light and strength to accomplish His holy will." There was a current rumour, that although he was irreproachable, his grand-vicar was as worthy of blame; on this head he one day said smilingly, "The Marquis Tanucci has said that I am a saint, and that my grand-vicar is an unworthy man; he has made two false assertions, I am no more a saint than my grand-vicar is a worthless man, for he does nothing without me." There were murmurings about a dissension which agitated a certain part of the diocese, and it was believed that the bishop was not occupied in remedying it. Don Anthony Clement, the canon of the college of Montella, happened to be in this same place to preach there during Lent, and they begged him to speak about it to his Lordship. He did so, and Alphonso after having explained all that he had done to him, showed him that he had nothing left to do. Don Clement was struck with the great zeal and profound humility of this justification of his Lordship's.

Although Mgr. Liguori was nothing more so to speak than a living skeleton, and although all that remained to him was the sole power of moving his lips, as was the case with holy Job, he employed even this mere breath of life for the good of his flock. In order to be ac-

cessible to all, he caused his bed to be placed in a room where every one might have access; it was his only apartment, or to speak more correctly, his sole apartment was his bed; it was there that he ate, that he studied, and that he gave audience; except at the time of meditation, he had no fixed hours. He wished his door to be open to every body, but the poor were especially privileged. "He had always a serene and contented appearance even when on his bed," said Father Caputo; "he was always the same, and ready to see every one." This serenity and this obligingness with which he treated the rich were manifested by him in an equal degree towards the very poorest and most miserable, and he never showed the smallest impatience towards them. We were in admiration at seeing such incessant activity even in the midst of his sufferings, and felt full of shame ourselves, we whom the least difficulty casts down."

Not a day passed in which he did not receive or despatch several messages, either for the repair of some disorder, or to inquire into the state of things. However great had been his vigilance up till this time, it appeared to be redoubled in his latter years, and as he who fears not to be able to attain his end hastens his steps in order to reach it; so Alphonso always imagining that he did not fulfil his office well, unceasingly redoubled his solicitude in order to accomplish his duties better. As soon as he heard of any disorders he took no rest; he asked advice, he examined it, and provided for its removal.

There was not a single day that he did not cause some priest or episcopal vicar to come to Arienzo, in order to become acquainted with all that could concern him. "You see in what state I am," he said to the priests, "if you are not careful in informing me of all the disorders which occur, you will be responsible for all the mischief, and should you not be so, remember that from this time I accuse you of them before the tribunal of God." When he was informed of any abuse through the medium of some one else, and not by the priest, especially if this latter had kept silence through human respect, he lost all peace, and in spite of all his mildness, he never disguised how much he felt it to any one. This vigilance in regard to secular priests also extended to religious, the wicked amongst whom found in him an inflexible opponent. He addressed such lively remonstrances to the provincials, that they were obliged to expel all amongst their subjects who misconducted themselves from the diocese. I heard from the priest Don Pascal Bartolini, that only a year before he resigned the episcopate he caused two religious who occasioned scandal to be banished from Airola, and that he took the greatest pains in order to obtain his point. It happened that a superior was embarrassed on account of the irregularities of two of his subjects; he told the provincial that these two religious were not to remain in the diocese; he tried to temporise, and endeavoured to exculpate the culprits. "Do not oblige me to take rigorous measures," replied Alphonso, "for I shall not

forgive you if you do." The result was the departure of the two wicked religious. Another excited suspicions by his conduct; that was sufficient to cause him to be banished to a very distant monastery. Many similar cases, as we shall elsewhere show, took place while his Lordship was nearly in his last agony, and rather to be numbered amongst the dead than the living.

The laity were no less the objects of his watchfulness, than they were formerly. When there was any scandal, and paternal exhortations were of no avail, he had recourse to the help of the great, and even to that of the king in case of need. When there was any disorder to be checked, he did not suffer it to be deferred until the following day, if it could be done at once. "He neither took food nor rest," said the grand-vicar Rubini to me, "until he saw the evil cut down to the roots, and when any matter of this sort was in question, the only meal he took in the whole course of the day was the evening one."

The good of his seminary seemed also to interest him more and more. He required to be informed of the way in which things were going on there several times a week. He very often caused Father Caputo to come to Arienzo. Sometimes he sent for the students whose conduct and labours were distinguished as being exemplary, and made them give an account of the conduct of the others. He never suffered any fault, the example of which might be contagious. "There will always be evil sheep," said he, "but we must nevertheless do all we can to

cure them." He was especially vigilant over those who stayed at home on account of indisposition; he particularly recommended them to the care of the priests and episcopal vicars. When he received information of the misconduct of a seminarist, he caused him to be reproved, and if this were not followed by amendment, the subject ceased to form a part of his flock. The young pupils were much more afraid of displeasing their bishop when he was paralytic and stretched on his sick bed, than when he was up and well.

If the illness of a pupil appeared to be put on, he used every exertion to come at the real truth about it. Father Caputo stated his doubts to him as to the reality of the indisposition of several of them, and so Alphonso wrote to him on the 4th of September, 1773: "As to the pupils who pretend to be ill, I have taken all the pains I could to arrive at the truth; I have caused them to come to me, and I have found that some of them really do require to remain away in order to take baths or other remedies; but there is one about whom I am in doubt myself. I am going to send letters to intimate to all, even to those who are in foreign countries, that they must return to the seminary, unless there be any real impediment in the way; and that otherwise they will be dismissed. I am engaged in inquiring into the absence of one of them which is said to be without cause. If it be true, I hope that his expulsion may serve as an example to all those who may be tempted to

imitate his indifference. I must beg your Reverence to make inquiries, and to be firm when you are in doubt about any of them, even if the physician's opinion should be in favour of the pupil, or at least, in this case write to me, and we shall see what is to be done, for I am afraid that the illnesses of many are only feigned."

As he condemned the vacations being passed out of the establishment, he wished that all suitable recreations should be afforded in the seminary, and that nothing should be spared which could in this respect conduce to the preservation of the health of the pupils. "When the vacations are passed in the seminary," said he in the same letter, "let the pupils go out every morning and evening; and during the hot weather let them go out once in the afternoon also, at whatever hour may be most convenient; follow the dictates of prudence in the matter. Pray for me to Jesus Christ."

His vigilance in regard to candidates for ordination and confessors, seemed also to increase after his illness. "Until the end of his government," said the priest Bartolini, "he always evinced indefatigable zeal in causing the confessors and candidates for orders to be examined in his presence; he required knowledge and good conduct from them all. He said that ignorance renders a subject useless, but that bad conduct renders him useless and hurtful." Canon Rubini relates that he showed even more severity than ever in this respect latterly, and the reason he gave for it was that he did not wish to give his successor occasion to weep over sin.

He no sooner regained a little strength than he also wished to perform the ministry of the word. As he could not go on foot, and had no longer a carriage, he borrowed one from some gentleman or other. Although he was so paralyzed, he went about preaching everywhere where any solemnity gave a prospect of a numerous audience. On account of his great infirmities, he required several persons to place him in his carriage, and to aid him in ascending the pulpit. Whilst he preached, his face was not seen; his arm only moved about towards the people; however he went on unhesitatingly for hours, and I know not whether his words or the touching spectacle he himself presented, were the most affecting.

The church where he had been in the habit of celebrating the fête of the holy cross was too large for his voice, so he wrote to Father Villani: "As the Church of St. Andrew is too large, I must beg your Reverence to come for these three days. Do not be uneasy as to what you have to say; you will say something on the cross, that is to say, on the love of Jesus Christ who died for us on the cross, but the substance of the sermon will consist in speaking against blasphemy, against hatred, and especially against impurity, against occasions of sin and bad confessions. That is the end of this solemnity. If the state of your health should happen to be an obstacle to your departure, send me one of our best fathers, for ecclesiastics and gentlemen are invited to this feast."

He was conducted to the church every year when mass was celebrated on Holy Saturday; after that he seated himself at the side of the altar, and announced the coming of Easter to the people, endeavouring to excite his children to a state of spiritual resurrection, by a picture of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He strongly urged all those who had not yet fulfilled their Easter duty to comply with this holy command.

He was particularly watchful in seeing that the priests did not omit to instruct the people and catechise the children. He did not pass over the least negligence. A man died in the country without the sacraments; as the priest appeared to be to blame, Alphonso was already prepared to punish him, when he anticipated him, and wrote to him as to the state of the case: "I have read your letter," replied Alphonso on the 10th of March, 1773. "It is true, Sir, that you have been accused of the things of which you speak to me, but do not doubt that after I have examined into it all in concert with my council, justice shall be rendered to you."

He opened the visitation of the 2nd of July, in the year 1769, in the college of Arienzo, being assisted thither and supported by his servants. It was a sight which caused all present to shed tears; he preached to the people and to the clergy, and made all the necessary arrangements. Canon Jermieri, his secretary, wished to perpetuate the remembrance of this memorable act, and so he registered it in the archives of the bishopric in the following terms: "Die se-

cunda julii 1769, decurrente festivitate B. Virginis Mariæ, illustrissimus et reverendissimus Episcopus ordinarius, post vesperas, habituali sua infirmitate non obstante, petiit ecclesiam insignem collegialem hujus terræ...et indutus cappa et rocheto oscalatus fuit crucem ab admodum reverendo archipresbytero porrectam; indeque ingressus eamdem ecclesiam, habito sermone ad populum, recepit omnes ad osculum manus."

His Lordship also continued to visit the college and the parishes of the adjacent villages every year. He always felt the greatest interest in his pastoral visitations. "However flourishing a graft may be," said he, "if the trunk on which it is grafted is not pruned of its wild shoots, they will be like so many natural branches which will exhaust the graft. The same thing occurs in the culture of souls," continued he, "if one does not cut away all that is wild, that is to say, all that nature produces of herself, the good that one has grafted in cannot fail to perish."

As he was unable to go to distant places in person, he supplied his place by the grand-vicar, to whom he especially commended the poor, widows, and those innocent souls whom indigence exposes to the danger of being lost. He was informed that the priest Don Dominic Nuzzo in the parish of St. Peter and St. Paul, had transgressed some of his decrees, especially in regard to certain church-furniture which he ought to have had renewed; he sequestered twelve ducats from his stipend, in order to make

these repairs, which he entrusted to the management of Canon Don Mark Anthony d' Ambrosio. As the observance of discipline in regard to the choir and in vestments had suffered a little in consequence of his absence from the cathedral of St. Agatha, he issued an edict in 1770, renewing the ordinances he had formerly decreed on this subject; it was only in 1774, that is to say, a year before his resignation, that he ceased to make the visitation in person, as his state then made it quite impossible for him to go on with it.

However, though he had not sufficient strength to give the spiritual exercises to the priests and religious as before, he assembled them together at the bishop's house, and during at least three days reminded them of the duties of their state. He had also just the same zeal in regard to the sacred edifices. As he noticed that the parochial church of Bucciano was dirty and too small for the people, he several times let the priest know that it required to be enlarged. The priest was afraid of the trouble and expense, and could not resolve to commence the work; but as his Lordship thought that the holy mysteries could not be decently celebrated in the church in the state it was in, he ordered in the visitation of 1773, that some adjacent ground should be bought within the space of one month, and he had the satisfaction of seeing a large edifice erected and one worthy of the purpose for which it was consecrated.

"The memory of Mgr. Liguori," said the priest

Don Pascal Bartolini, "will never be forgotten in the diocese of St. Agatha. The zeal for the glory of God which formed a chief part of his character was very great, and actuated him unceasingly up to the moment when we had the sorrow of seeing him quit the diocese. Although paralytic he was always vigilant in driving away wolves from his flock, and in procuring the spiritual advantage of his sheep by every possible means. The least disorder he became acquainted with deprived him of all rest until he had taken measures to remedy it. He unceasingly fortified his people by his counsels and by the bread of the Gospel, and he sent zealous preachers everywhere where he could not go himself. Two years before he resigned the bishopric, he again sent our missionaries of the diocese, in company with the Redemptorist fathers, to preach in divers parishes, and I myself was one of the number." The grand-vicar Rubini, Archdeacon Rainone, and Father Caputo, and every one else indeed agreed in giving him the same praise. "A hundred bishops put together," Archdeacon Rainone wrote to me, "would not have done what Mgr. Liguori alone did, notwithstanding all his infirmities."

CHAPTER XLVI.

The double burthen of a diocese, as well as that of a congregation whose wants were so multiplied, did not however occupy Alphonso entirely. We have seen the wise counsels which he gave to his brother Hercules on his second marriage; he took however a still greater interest in the spiritual welfare of his nephews.

Don Hercules had four children by his second marriage, a daughter and three boys, of whom two were twins, and he wished Alphonso to be the godfather to all four. During Donna Marianne's first pregnancy Don Hercules took her to Arienzo; the couple mutually flattered themselves that they would obtain a male child; his Lordship however gave a little picture of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Marianne, and said to her, "You will not give birth to a boy, but to a little girl, and I should like you to call her Mary-Theresa." And this really came to pass. Don Hercules wished that his Lordship should hold the newborn babe at the baptismal font; Alphonso consented to this, and his gift to her on the occasion was a relic of St. Agatha, which he had himself been made a present of; it was in a little silver box which did not exceed a few pence in value.

Don Hercules continued to urge Alphonso to pray to God to grant him a male child. He went with his wife to Airola, where the prelate

then was during Donna Marianne's second pregnancy. When they took leave of Alphonso, they asked him to pray to God to grant them a son. Alphonso in reply gave Donna Marianne two pictures of St. Louis, he told her to be of good courage, and that God would certainly comfort her. Two pictures of the same saint seemed undoubtedly a mystery; and Donna Marianne was happily delivered of twin-sons. They were comforted by the birth of a third son after this.

His Lordship took a great interest in the education of his four nephews. Besides the tie of blood, his office of sponsor also combined to render him scrupulous in this respect. One of them, as we have already said, was regenerated in the baptismal waters by Alphonso himself. As they grew in age their uncle's solicitude also increased that they might imbibe the milk of piety betimes. The priest Don Dominic Pedicino, who acted as their tutor, told me that no letter ever came from St. Agatha in which Alphonso did not urge his brother to attend to the education of his sons. He even composed a short rule for them, which was appropriate to their age, in order that they might pass the day devoutly. In a letter which he wrote to Don Hercules on the 4th of December, 1770, he expresses himself thus: "For the love of God often call to mind what I have begged so frequently in regard to the business of your eternal salvation. I am pleased to hear that my little godsons practise the devotions I have recommended for them; I hope they will be inclined to become saints."

Don Hercules was greatly rejoiced at having obtained three sons from God at an advanced age. As he was persuaded that he owed them to the intercession and to the prayers of his brother, he thought it right to introduce them to their uncle. One day therefore when he went to Arienzo, he took them all three with him and presented them to his Lordship, and said to him, "See, Alphonso, how beautiful they are! this one is called Alphonsino, and those two are the twins: see how well they behave." His Lordship then looked at the twins, and said, "If you should lose one of these two, should you be very sad at it?" "Oh! then it will be so," replied Don Hercules. His Lordship slightly smiled and was silent, but he had prophesied. After some months one of the twin brothers died. The disconsolate and aged father came to St. Agatha to seek for comfort from his Lordship, when he reminded him of his prophecy. "Do not say any more to me," he said to him, "for your prophecies are too inauspicious." "Fear no more," replied Alphonso, "for you will preserve the sons who now remain to you, and will see that they will live and grow old."

Alphonso loved his brother's children, and would have wished them to have been perfect. He himself gave them confirmation, after having instructed them about this sacrament. When they came to see him at St. Agatha, he explained to them their duties towards God and towards their parents, the nature of sin, and told them how much bad conduct dishonours

a Christian and also a gentleman. He above all tried to inspire them with love for Jesus Christ, and a tender devotion towards the Blessed Virgin. When they grew up a little, he advised his brother to take great pains about their instruction, but especially not to entrust them to any masters but those whose probity was well known, and who united Christian piety to knowledge. Don Hercules intended to place them in the college of the nobility, and he communicated it to his brother, who replied to him on the 15th of December, 1771, saying, "I cannot approve of your project of placing your sons at the college of the nobility in November, because I have not an over good opinion of that establishment; besides, boys are not fit to enter a college until they are at least ten or twelve years of age. In order to prevent their imbibing vice in their very infancy, it is good for them at present to remain with yourself, and when God wills it, it will be time to think of their going elsewhere; but I repeat, that they ought not to go to college now. I should like to know where they may best be placed so as to become virtuous as well as learned."

Prince Pignatelli told him that the college of Nunziatella, where he had a son, was going to be closed on account of its want of success, and that this establishment would pass into the hands of the Fathers of the Pious Schools, otherwise called the Sommasque Fathers: Alphonso wrote to his brother, saying, "Should this college be under the direction of these good Fathers of the

Pious Schools, I should be inclined to wish my nephews to be entrusted to the management of these good priests, because they are especially pains-taking from the first, in forming the children who are confided to them properly, and thus your sons would make more progress in three or four years than they would make elsewhere in twice that time."

Don Hercules, who thought of temporal advantages, would have liked to place his sons in the royal houses for the young pages; but although the prince was favourable to his wishes, Alphonso dissuaded him from it. "The more innocent children are," he wrote to him, "the more easily may they be corrupted by frequenting the society of others, especially if these latter are older than themselves. The malice of but one is enough to cause the ruin of a hundred. Keep them under your own eyes, and God will provide for the rest when the proper time shall come. For your part, have their spiritual good at heart, and Providence will supply their temporal interests without injury to those of the soul."

Although his ancestors were illustrious in war, and thus had merited the patronage of their sovereigns, Alphonso was quite an enemy to this mode of life. "There are good people in this state," he often said, "but the generality, and especially the young men in it, are unsteady, and I know not if they are in a state of grace." Having heard that his brother wished to present his two sons to the king, and to

avail himself of the first opportunity when he should be admitted to kiss his hands for this purpose, he wished him not to do it. "If the king were to tell you," he wrote to him, in a letter of the 13th of November, "that he wishes to have your sons as cadets in the brigade or in some other regiment, you will be obliged to make them cadets or soldiers, and thus to risk the loss of their souls as well as that of their bodies. I see that you do not enter into my sentiments as to the way to bring up these dear little children, and you do the contrary of what I tell you. You are their father, therefore can do what you please, but I am greatly afraid that you will one day have cause to repent of some misfortune which you will then be unable to remedy. The love which I bear towards you and your children has made me write thus. I am confined to my room by a cold on the chest like those I usually have, and which have several times brought me to the brink of the grave, but I am at peace, and await death without dread."

The great consolation Don Hercules experienced in seeing himself the father of such a fine family at an advanced age, was soon troubled by a deplorable incident. Donna Marianne was tormented by scruples, and lost her senses. "I sympathise in your sorrow," Alphonso wrote to him on the 5th of April, 1768, "in regard to the calamity which has befallen Donna Marianne, and I beg God to give you patience. Since He has sent you this cross, you must accept it with

good courage; otherwise it will become more weighty, and you will be still obliged to bear it." "I beg your Reverence," he wrote to Father Villani, after imparting to him his brother's affliction, "to recommend him to God, and to write to all our houses to pray for Donna Marianne, for my poor brother is in great distress."

"I have heard of Donna Marianne's state with pity," he wrote to Don Hercules, on the 9th of December, 1769, "but it is principally on your account. I pray God to grant you patience, and be assured that I will not cease to pray to Him for you. On the other hand, I exhort you to practise entire resignation, and to be comforted as well as your little children." In a letter of the 4th of December, 1770, he says, "I do not cease to pray for you, for your dear children, and for all your household. May God preserve you in good health, for you are now necessary to your family. I have been comforted at hearing that Don Gaetan takes care of Alphonsino, and still more that he is now able to say mass. Tell him to recommend me to Jesus Christ, as I on my part do as regards him and you all." About this time Alphonso gave his brother a proof of his disinterestedness. Don Charles Cavalieri, his cousin, the general and governor at Mantua, died at that town, and left sixty thousand ducats to the Bishop of St. Agatha and to Don Hercules; Alphonso did not hesitate to yield it all without reserve to his brother. He expressed himself in the following terms on this subject, and with regard to all that

might happen of a similar sort at any other time, in a letter of the 23rd of March, 1770: "I do not wish for rents, nor possessions, nor anything else I may have a claim to; even were I to be no longer bishop, I could live on my income from the college of doctors. Be satisfied therefore, and do not be uneasy on this head; it is enough for you to know that I lay no claim to any money from you, either for the past or the future."

His Lordship remembered Don Hercules's great age, and his own declining years, and succeeded in getting him to make his will, and to select guardians for his nephews betime. He heard from Don Hercules that he had turned his thoughts to Counsellor Caracciolo, and the advocate Don Peter Anthony Gavotti. Alphonso approved of his choice, and told them that in case either he or his brother should die, they must watch carefully over the education of the children, and he wrote to his brother, saying, "Continue to be of good courage, and do not get alarmed on account of the will, because making one's will does not abridge one's life. I repeat once more, I wish for none of your goods, dispose of everything freely in favour of my dear nephews."

Alphonso heard from his other brother Gaetan that Don Hercules had made use of a sum of a thousand ducats on the chaplainship of the Prince of Presiccio, their relation, and that he had not yet made it good. "I should not like you to commit any act of injustice to the prejudice of your conscience for this capital," he

wrote to Don Hercules, "for what I care about is the concerns of your conscience. In conclusion, take care and settle with Don Gaetan." Don Hercules had a matter of business to settle with another person, and Alphonso wrote to him on the subject, saying, "I advise you to be scrupulous as to what I have already spoken to you about several times; you have not yet told me that you have arranged it; this delay makes me very uneasy, I can assure you."

CHAPTER XLVII.

We have already seen how much the saintly bishop's thoughts were occupied about his flock, and with what care he sought to obviate all that could be injurious to their salvation, and to procure all that could facilitate it. His solicitude as a pastor did not stifle the sentiments of tenderness he owed to his nephews, and we have seen all the details of the correspondence he entered into with his brother when the manner of providing for their instruction was in question. In the midst of all these occupations, and in spite of the corporal pains which we have described, the man of God did not forget his first spiritual children, the members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. In order to manifest the desire he preserved long after his separation from them, of causing that virtue and evangelical per-

fection to flourish, which he had formerly taught by his own example, we will transcribe a circular which he addressed to all our houses, on the 26th of February, 1771.

"My very dear brothers, you already know that within a short space of time God has called several of our companions into eternity; you also know how much the congregation is persecuted. However, none of all this gives me any alarm, but I am alarmed at seeing some amongst us who have little fervour and numerous faults. St. Philip Neri said that ten holy workmen would suffice for the conversion of the whole world. I write to you this time with tearful eyes, for I hear that several amongst you correspond badly with the end for which God called them into our little congregation, and they allow themselves to be governed by a spirit of pride. God cannot dwell in hearts where Christian humility, fraternal charity, and peace are absent. Our sin in not corresponding to God's grace makes me tremble more than the most furious persecutions from men and devils; God will protect us against these enemies, when we live according to His will, and then we can say, 'Si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?' but if we behave ill towards God, He will chastise instead of protecting us. I feel great displeasure when I hear that any of the young amongst you do not live according to evangelical perfection, which is the peculiar duty of the labourers of Jesus Christ; but the pain I suffer is still more keen, and the sadness of my heart is still greater when I am told that

faults of insubordination and of non-observance of the rule are committed by the fathers, or by the most aged and most ancient brothers, by those, in short, who ought to serve as models for the younger and those recently received.

"In my letters and by my discourses, I have always enforced holy obedience and submission to superiors, who are the interpreters of the will of God here below. On them depend good order, the glory of God, the success of the missions, and the peace of our souls. Whoever obeys punctually is sure to do the whole will of God, in which alone true peace is to be found. It is in order to destroy the influence of these truths and the effect they produce for our greatest good, that the devil continues to tempt some amongst you to attach little weight to obedience; it is in consequence of this temptation that they are uneasy, and that they make their companions and their superiors uneasy by endeavouring to deceive them as they deceive themselves by evil pretexts, which the enemy of their salvation represents to them as the effects of a zeal whose end is the reform of abuses and the love of justice. Reform and zeal are talked of, but no thoughts are entertained of reforming one's own conduct, which is more evil than that of the rest. He who wishes to remain amongst us must resolve to obey and not to disturb the house where he is, or that which may be assigned to him. I am determined not to put up with subjects whose disedifying lives cast discredit on the work of the missions, and are productive

of no good either to themselves or others. My brothers and my sons in Jesus Christ, you must fully enter into what I say: God wishes to have obedience and respectful submission to superiors from you rather than a hundred sacrifices and a thousand more striking works. God wishes us to be poor and contented with the poverty we profess; and we ought to thank Him if by His mercy we have bread to eat, and if He provides us with the necessaries of life. He who is not satisfied to lead a life of poverty amongst us in food and clothing, had better take leave of our society without troubling us further, and can go and live as he likes at home; I am ready to give him permission, for God will not have discontented servants in His house, who serve Him by constraint and cause constant disturbance.

"The complaints of some are truly worthy of ridicule: they say that their health suffers in the congregation, as if they entered it to gain immortality on earth, and exemption from all infirmity. We must die, and before death we must be ill. What ought to be the principal aim of him who enters the congregation, but that of pleasing God and making a good death? and this grace has been already obtained by many of our good brothers who have now passed into eternity, and who are at present, I feel assured, all occupied in thanking God for having caused them to die in the congregation. My brothers, when infirmity comes, embrace it as coming from the hand of God, and do not be seduced by the suggestions of the devil."

Passing on then to the proper manner of preaching, he recommends that which he always practised himself, and which he had so often taught in person when he was at either Ciorani or at Iliceto. "Let each of you," said he, "renounce the vain glory of shining, even in preaching the word of God, as so many others do. I cannot suffer that sort of polished style adorned by periods and chosen words, which is the plague-spot of preaching, for by it we gradually lose the simple and familiar style, by means of which our missions have never ceased to produce prodigious conversions, through the mercy of God. Even when a discourse on some saint is in question, the panegyric on his virtues must be made in a simple and familiar style, and you must endeavour to conclude by useful moral reflections for the benefit of the auditors. We must not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ crucified; we must proclaim His glory, and not display our vanity; I pray God to send His chastisements down on those who preach with vanity; I wish, yes, I wish that they may be rendered unable to ascend the pulpit of truth, and I hope that my desires will be granted."

ALPHONSO'S ADVICE TO PREACHERS AS TO HOW THEY MUST ACT IN ORDER TO HANDLE THE DIVINE WORD HOLILY.

"1. The preacher ought to speak of the truths of the Gospel in the pulpit, and should never make curious and useless observations.

"2. He ought to prepare himself for preaching by the study of the sacred writings, by prayer, and by meditation.

"3. If the preacher is not himself impressed by the truths he preaches, he will never produce fruit in others.

"4. He must be as pains-taking as possible in studying his sermon, that is to say, in composing it properly; he must take still more pains in learning it, and in delivering it so as to do honour to our ministry.

"5. The preacher ought to prove what he advances, and not to utter sayings and words which come to nothing.

"6. The style of a sermon ought not to resemble that used by poets and dramatic authors; this style is only fit for fables, and only serves to flatter the ears and to corrupt the imagination.

"7. Sublimity of style does not consist in a selection of phrases taken from profane authors, and in hard words, or in that which renders a discourse obscure and unintelligible.

"8. It consists in the choice of sublime truths, and in the art of making them clearly understood by the auditors.

"9. All the truths of our holy religion are very sublime, and if they are expounded with order and clearness, and in a manner calculated to bring forth fruit, a sermon is truly sublime.

"10. There are preachers who weary themselves by only speaking in an obscure manner, but they will find the evil of this at the hour of

death, and before the dreadful tribunal of the supreme Judge.

"11. The art of preaching with clearness and simplicity is so difficult a one, that many learned men have not succeeded in it.

"12. The holy Scriptures, the holy fathers, and the Spirit of Jesus Christ alone, can form a great preacher; and the only style which can operate on souls effectually, comes from the grace of the Holy Ghost.

("Rispoli, Vita del Beato Alphonso Maria de Liguorio, pag. 76—77, Napoli, 1834.")

"My brothers, I love you all more than I should love a brother according to the flesh; and when any of you leave our society, I grieve more than I can say. But when I see that mortification has attacked a sick member, and that he requires the use of caustic, I must use it whatever pain it may cost me. I am persuaded that God preserves my life at so advanced an age, in order to remedy the disorders which have arisen, to the detriment of the work of the missionaries; I am resolved to remedy them at all costs. God does not require many. It is sufficient if but few remain, if those few be good; a few of this latter sort will do more good than a great number of imperfect, proud, and disobedient.

"I continually pray for you, my brothers; pray also for me too. I must beg each one in particular to recommend me to Jesus in a special manner, in order that He may grant me a good

death, which cannot well be far distant, as well on account of my infirmities as of my age; I am nearly seventy-six years of age; I trust that I shall be saved, and that I may be able to intercede with God for the interests of the congregation in another life. Therefore I say to all those who may despise the advice I have just given, that at the judgment day they will find that I shall be their first accuser before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. I have never ceased to give the same warnings to all my brothers, but notwithstanding all that I have seen many turn their backs on God by quitting the congregation. I shall expect to see these miserable beings and all who may resemble them at the day of judgment.

"I have also to tell you, that in regard to the young men who are not priests, I wish to be informed when they are going to receive any holy order; for I will not allow any one to be ordained before his whole conduct has been strictly investigated, and if he is not free from all the objections laid down in his majesty's decrees. I hope never to do the least thing which could be displeasing either to God or to the king, for this reason I beg you all in general and in particular to write to me with sincerity about any faults which you have observed in any of our candidates, although I may not have given you this office.

"I do not wish the young men to go on missions before the age of thirty, and when there is any necessity for giving a dispensation on this head, I wish to be informed of it.

"I advise you all to observe exactly the praiseworthy practices which are in use amongst us for the promotion of piety and sanctification. I enforce obedience to superiors, and love towards Jesus Christ and His adorable passion. I do the same also in regard to prayer, the spiritual exercises, and the customary retreat. Let him who loves Jesus Christ be obedient, let him be contented with all, and always remain in tranquillity.

"I conclude by once more entreating you all with tears to act as you ought, and not to grieve me during the few days which I have yet to live. The love and respect you have always shown towards me, lead me to hope for this. I bless you all."

It is thus that our saintly founder encouraged us and never let us stand still in the way of perfection. However slight an infraction of the rule might be committed in the congregation, it did not remain unpunished: "Uncorrected faults," said he, "become an established evil." On hearing that some young clerics of St. Angelus de Cupoli had become lax in the practice of virtue, and unsteady in the observance of the rule, he was not satisfied with forbidding them to receive holy orders, he wished that they should be sent back into the noviciate in order that they might there regain the fervour which was lacking in them; and he did not pardon them until he was assured of their amendment. He was extremely anxious, as we have seen, that the

subjects should not go to their parents' houses, except in case of absolute necessity. As he heard that some indulgence was practised on this head, he did not hesitate to complain of it to Father Villani, who governed in his stead. Father Villani justified himself, and received the following letter of reply bearing date the 26th of September, 1772: "It is not your Reverence whom I accuse, but the rectors of our houses, and therefore I beg you to warn them about it. In conclusion, I know that this permission ought to be granted under certain circumstances, and in this respect, I am sure that you will exercise discretion. Act in this matter then with all liberty, as well as in every other, and do as you think best."

The exterior trials of the congregation also caused him to suffer interiorly. The good became discouraged by them, and the others acted as if set free from observance of the rule, and seemed neither to fear Alphonso nor the superiors. In these critical times it was necessary to exercise moderation; so Alphonso thought it right not to increase the fire; and instead of casting oil on the flames, he preferred to take advantage of the good dispositions of the one set to retain those whom the devil might tempt, and thus prevent their joining the enemies without; he acted with circumspection, and was not so prompt as usual in pronouncing sentence of exclusion. Two of these subjects were tired of the rule, and no longer took the trouble to observe it: one of them was from St Angelus de

Cupoli, and the other from Ciorani; Alphonso sent for them to Arienzo, and spoke to them, but without success. In their blindness, they went so far as to say that they would remain in the congregation in spite even of him, and that if any attempt were made to dismiss them, they would know how to act. Alphonso in sorrow told me that the circumstances of the times did not allow of their being expelled from the congregation, but that which he did not do God would do for him; and so it came to pass, one of them asked for a dispensation to go that same year, and the other speedily followed his example. "I know," he wrote on the 13th of October, to the superior of Frosinone, "that it is necessary at present to have the patience of a saint with some, and to go on waiting without gaining what one wishes for; but what can be done? Let us aid the bark as much as we can, and if we meet with scandals, let us not hesitate; let us repress them by the punishments they deserve; it is our duty to punish them, and we must fulfil our duty, let what will happen. And even if we do not punish them, would they be thereby at all shielded from the chastisements which God has in store for them?" He wished honey to be in the mouth, and a sword in the hand. "I beg your Reverence," he wrote to the Father Rector Cajone, "to govern with all possible mildness, added to great firmness against all attacks against the rule, for they do us more harm than all our persecutions. When it is necessary to use correction, do it privately in the

first place, and with charity, and treat every one with affability and kindness."

While he rejoiced at getting rid of disobedient subjects, he experienced deep sorrow at seeing some lose courage and abandon their vocation for health's sake alone. A sick subject asked him for a dispensation from his vows, on the 3rd of October, 1772. "I grant it with regret," he replied to the rector, "but I cannot help reminding him that there are several houses in the congregation, and that if the air of one of them does not suit a subject, he can be sent to another. We have consideration for sickly bodies; we take care of them, and we do not require an exact observance of all the points of the rule from them as from those in good health. It must also be remembered, that if, in spite of all sorts of remedies, and of all the care, the attentions, and charity which can be bestowed on us, God wishes to call us to Himself, we are all ready to go to Him, as we have left the world and entered into religion, in order not to die in the world and amongst our relations, but in God's own house. I send him the dispensation, but let him be told that although he may recover his health entirely on quitting the congregation, he will never more find peace, but he will die in disquiet from the thought of having been unfaithful to his vocation. I pray Jesus Christ to bless him, but for me, I cannot resolve to bless one who turns his back on Jesus Christ." This subject did not recover his health, and on his death-bed he felt all that Alphonso had foretold.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

He who recoils at the sight of a barrier does not for that renounce the idea of surmounting it. Thus our adversaries in the kingdom only desisted from their attacks while Alphonso was in Naples, in order not to waste their efforts at a time when they would have derived no profit from them; but they intended to return to the assault at a more opportune time, and with renewed strength, and with expedients which it would be more difficult to ward off. Thus by giving a false interpretation to the decision the king gave when he said, that he did not recognise our houses as communities, which he did in order to prevent our acquiring property; they took advantage of these words, and drew matter for accusation against us from them, which seemed to furnish them with an engine too formidable to resist. "The king," they said, "does not wish for a community, and they form communities in spite of the sovereign. They have general and local superiors, a noviciate and a master of novices, clerical students, and a prefect of studies; they have rules and constitutions; thus they have everything which can form a community equal to any other, even of those which are most celebrated. All this therefore proves their opposition to the prohibitions of the sovereign. And besides that, they obtain

graces and privileges from the Pope, even to the prejudice of the royal authority, and to the great detriment of parishes and bishoprics." As they were in hopes of finding arms wherewith to combat us advantageously out of our rule, which had been approved by the Pope, they sought to obtain possession of it. They applied to the king, and obtained an order to get a copy from the court of Benevento. But they misinterpreted the decision of the king, who had himself wished for the erection of our houses, and had consented to their establishment with a head, a rule, and constitutions; but in order to prevent our making acquisitions, he declared that he did not recognise our houses as communities, and thus they were rendered incapable of having property. They therefore drew up a fresh petition, filled with new calumnies against us. As nothing was then talked of but Jesuitism, our enemies took advantage of this, and represented us as forming only a branch of the latter, or rather, as being Jesuits in disguise. They said that our rule was nothing but an extract from that of the Jesuits; that the Society of Jesus had been banished on account of its form of government, which caused it to be an object of suspicion and danger to the state; that we concealed ourselves under another name, in order not to be suspected of forming part of the proscribed society, from which however we only differed in name. The former company was called that of Jesus, the new one bore the name of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. There was

also another difference, which was, that the Jesuits were an approved body, while the Congregationists were destitute of lawful authority, and were therefore in open opposition to the laws of the kingdom.

After this serious accusation, they came to particular causes of complaint, among which they found one which was all the more formidable from appearing to be well founded. In order to satisfy the devotion of our benefactors, the superiors of our houses were in the habit of granting them a share in our good works. This appeared a serious crime in Maffei's eyes, and one which he could profit by, if he could prove it. In order to effect this, he sent emissaries, at his own expense, to make a note of these sort of affiliations in the different provinces, which were an evident proof that we formed communities according to our adversaries. They added that such a course had never been pursued by the most distinguished and the most ancient orders. Such a violent storm filled us all with fear, and we were almost without hope. Our enemies were considered as so sure of success, that every one considered us as already lost. Alphonso was old and in a declining state, and if some further respite and length of days were granted to our congregation, at most it seemed as if it would only be during the life of our sole protector. However, all the boasts of our adversaries, which cast us down, did not succeed in discouraging the saintly old man. He tried to make us share in his confidence; he con-

stantly repeated to us, "People say that all will be put an end to after my death; I maintain that this congregation does not come from me, and that it does not depend on my existence. It is the work of God, who has preserved it for forty-two years, and He will continue to maintain it. Why should the king wish to dissolve it when it is not guilty? It does no injury to any one; it is received with acclamation by the bishops; it does not possess revenues; it cannot therefore be a cause of distrust to the sovereign. Let us take courage; the king said in a decree that he wished our company to be maintained, not only during the life of Alphonso Liguori, but for as long as it shall continue the work of the missions with its primitive fervour. So that our stability depends upon God in the first place, and then upon our own good conduct; let us therefore be careful to unite ourselves to God, to observe our rules, and to be charitable towards all; let us be contented even with our miseries, and above all, let us strive to be humble, because a little pride may destroy us in the same manner as it has so many other societies." We had not as much confidence as the saint, and our fears were founded on the old age and impaired health of the Bishop of St. Agatha. His life could not be prolonged for many years, and if he were dead, what power would the missionaries have? what support would remain to them? Father Villani went to Arienzo in the year 1772, accompanied by some of the other fathers. He set the state of things before the prelate with

tearful eyes, and implored him, if he loved the congregation, to repair to Naples to appease so furious a tempest. They spoke so plainly that Alphonso discovered the real cause of their fears, and told them to tranquillize themselves. "Do not be afraid that I shall die yet," he added; but as the fathers continued to urge him still more earnestly, he said to them several times over, "Do not fear for the congregation, and be assured that I shall live some time longer."

Although the storm was so violent, and though the winds tossed our little bark about until it seemed to be on the point of sinking, Alphonso trusted in God, and reposed peacefully in the arms of Providence.

However, Maffei, aided by Sarnelli, strove to obtain his point; but every thing did not go according to his wishes. The Marquis of Marco, the king's minister, as well as Don Balthasar Cito, the president of the royal council, were already aware of the character of the Lord of Iliceto, for they knew the outrages he had committed against our venerable brother Anthony Lucci, the Bishop of Bovino, and were far from favouring his wishes. For this reason he changed his course and his artifices; he applied to the prime minister, and left off addressing himself to the minister of ecclesiastical affairs. He once more gathered together the slanders he had already spread; he affirmed that immense acquisitions had been made by us in the kingdom and in the state of Benevento, but that they had been carefully concealed from the king by equivoca-

tions and mental reservations. This accusation had some weight with the Marquis of Tanucci, and as the cause had to be brought before the royal chamber, in an official despatch to the Duke of Turritto, the advocate of the king at this court, he ordered him to perform the duties of his office in this cause with rigour, and to give his majesty an account of the results, without losing sight of the fact that the missionaries ought not to possess anything. The accusations which were addressed to the prime minister had a most gloomy appearance to us, both because the Marquis of Tanucci looked on Maffei in a favourable point of view, and attributed all he did to nothing but zeal, and also because this latter had gained over some of the minister's clerks by means of his gifts. The chevalier Fernandez amongst others, who received large sums of money from him, aided him with all his might, and even went to the different offices in order to assist him in his schemes. The machinations still went on, and the commissioner of the country, Blaise Sanseverino and the Duke of Turritto, were ordered by another dispatch to make a report to the royal court of justice; they were enjoined to fulfil their office with all possible rigour, and to inform his majesty of the result of their researches.

When these details were related to his Lordship, he was not discouraged: "Let us act as we ought towards God," said he, "and He will aid us; for God can do more than man. Let us have recourse to the assistance of prayer.

Innocence and prayer are all-powerful." He recommended that there should be prayers in all the houses, and he never wrote any letter to his friends in which he did not also beg for their intercession; but he was still more anxious that fraternal charity should dwell amongst us, and that all should be careful in observing the rule properly.

Another cause of distress also happened about this time at Palermo. A period of repose had been enjoyed there since the first anxieties that our enemies had caused us; and as fine weather after a storm fills the mind of the mariner with joy, so we were happy at being again allowed to rest, and imparted to Alphonso our hopes of being able to go on with the good which we were producing in Sicily, and of preserving peace. They especially took care to inform him of a mission which had been given at the monastery with great success; but Alphonso always feared a calm more than a storm, and so he replied to them on the 30th of April, 1771, saying, "I feel great consolation at the exercises you have given at the convent, I derive comfort from them; but on the other hand, these very consolations fill me with fear. St. Theresa said that persecutions are the signs that the seed sown produces fruit; you are without persecutions, but here we are plentifully supplied with them; however, God assists us." Alphonso was so ill and in such suffering that he signed this letter "Brother Alphonso Maria the cripple." This tranquillity was not of long duration in Sicily; although the wis-

dom of the supreme council had rendered justice to Alphonso's merits and doctrine; although the Marquis of Fogliani, the viceroy of that island, had declared himself as the protector of our missionaries, and their doctrine and labours had merited the eulogium of the bishops and archbishops; yet our adversaries, who were not satisfied with having slandered us at Palermo, returned to attack us in this town with renewed strength; they heaped up calumnies upon calumnies, they stirred up again those which they had already spread, and pursued their prosecutions against us even to Naples. They stated to the king that the missionaries were tainted by evil principles, that they were Molinists and probabilists. They said that we were dangerous to the state and to the Church, that rapacity made us eagerly seek for gold instead of for souls, and that we had had the audacity to establish a house at Girgenti, in order from thence to be able to spread boldly throughout all Sicily. The priest Cannella especially sought to obtain the protection of the king, by giving himself out as having been persecuted by the missionaries on account of his professing sound doctrine, and through his opposition to that which we held, which, he said, was quite contrary to that of the Gospel and to the sentiments of the Church. This wretched man, who could not hope to be easily able to overcome the personal sentiments of the king, even with all the humility and sincerity he affected to possess exteriorly, did not confine himself to deceiving the prince. He attacked the

ministers, and sometimes visited one and sometimes another, to endeavour to set them against us. When Alphonso saw the affairs take this turn, he did not fail to justify himself and his congregation to the king and to the ministers. He represented that although the missionaries were at Girgenti, they were only there as strangers, subject to the ordinary, supported at the bishop's expense, and engaged in serving the inhabitants of the diocese, as they had done in the other part of the kingdom; that they had only gone to Sicily at the request of Mgr. Lucchesi; that this prelate, perceiving their value, had thought it well to retain them, but that he had been taken away by death without having had time to submit his project for the royal approbation. Father Don Peter Blasucci made similar representations to the supreme junta at Palermo, and especially to the consul Targianni. He protested that he and his brethren followed the doctrines which were the soundest and most approved by the Church. "Once for all," he said amongst other things, "let people be assured that we abhor the very name of Molinism and relaxed probabilism, looking upon these inventions as extravagances to which the simplicity of the Gospel is a stranger. Our system of theology is precisely that of not espousing any of the systems produced by the confined and narrow spirit of man, and of not subjecting our liberty and our reason to an arbitrary yoke. Such is a summary of the sentiments we cherish in our hearts and follow in our practice. During all

the time that we have exercised the apostolical ministry here, in a town and in a diocese where sound doctrine is professed, we have never been accused of publishing any sentiment which was either false or deserving of censure."

The minister saw the truth through this representation, and wrote to Alphonso on the 31st of March, 1772: "In answer to your most illustrious Lordship's letter of the 18th of this month, and after having fully considered what you speak of in regard to the suspicions you entertain, that the priest Joseph Cannella has perhaps injured the good opinion which was entertained in your regard, I declare to you that I have never taken upon me to condemn any doctrine as bad until its erroneousness has been proved to me. You may therefore rest assured of my impartiality, and if I have spoken in favour of Cannella, it has only been on the supposition that he was persecuted on account of his doctrine having been unjustly accused. I am always pleased at hearing preached the pure truths of Christian doctrine, according to the precepts of the Gospel, of the holy fathers, and of the Church."

About this same time Maffei thought of a new snare, into which we should have fallen if Alphonso, assisted by light from on high, had not been able to avoid it. All Iliceto joined with him in trying to ruin us, with the exception of the poor people; now, as Maffei was himself in difficulties through the opposition of the same populace, he tried to be at peace with us again,

in order to have us as mediators between him and his adversaries. The president, Ginesi, who protected us, approved of this project, and our advocate, Celano, who was of the same opinion, wanted our Father Fiocchi to repair to Iliceto to bring the negociation to a satisfactory end. The stratagem was a subtle one; but that which the president and the advocate had not suspected did not escape Alphonso.

After Father Villani had informed him of all this, Alphonso answered him, "It would be the means of alienating the minds of the inhabitants from us, without giving any hope of a reconciliation with Maffei; he is an untractable man, whom it is impossible to pacify. What Father Fiocchi might say to the people in favour of Maffei would be of no avail; they would all believe that we spoke not because Maffei is right, but to win his friendship. On the other hand, everything makes me believe, that in whatever way one may turn in the matter, right will always be found on the side of the people. So that it would be difficult for Father Fiocchi to say anything in favour of Maffei, without wounding his conscience and justice, and the inhabitants would always say that the missionaries only sought to get out of their difficulties and get on good terms with Maffei. We should thus only draw down their enmity, which would be much to be regretted. And if Father Fiocchi tries to make the balance incline in favour of the people, he will thereby increase Maffei's hatred against us, who will say that the opinion

which is against him is dictated by a spirit of vengeance. I am then decidedly of opinion that no one belonging to the congregation must accept such an office on any terms. The reasons which I have just set before you may be stated to the president, and I think they will suffice to convince any one."

However, Alphonso would have been glad if the president had interposed with Maffei, and tried to make up our differences. He thought that the congregation would have everything to gain in coming to an agreement and in getting out of the difficulties which all these obstacles caused. The only thing Alphonso had at heart in all these occurrences, was to preserve charity towards our enemies and the observance of the rule; he considered these as the most solid means of protecting us. "We ought not to do anything against Maffei," he wrote in a letter on the 1st of June, 1768, "but neither must we cause pain to the inhabitants, who may be of great assistance to us in our present circumstances; let us leave all to our good God, and consider it as a rule, not to stir without there is a necessity for it, and by necessity I only mean that of defending ourselves, without ever taking part against Maffei or any one else. However, do not let us lose confidence in the midst of this tempest," he wrote again to Father Villani, "it is great, but the power of God is still greater. I should not wish our fathers to tie the hands of God, by their own faults and short comings; this is what I feel

most strongly about. If we are faithful to God, a thousand contradictions and a thousand calumnies will not make any impression on me. The only thing which grieves me is sin committed against God. He will not fail to protect us, but let us constantly pray that He will deign to enlighten our adversaries."

CHAPTER XLIX.

The flames which were lighted in Sicily, so far from becoming extinguished, did nothing but increase. Cannella commented on the defences we had produced, and searched for concealments and equivocations in them, in order to draw something to our disadvantage from them to prejudice the judges, and while he stirred up the fire in Naples, his partisans were not idle at Palermo. They made use of so many artifices that doubts began to be entertained as to our sincerity. "Who does not see," said the junta of Palermo, "the skill with which the missionaries have given things such a favourable appearance, that if their residence at Girgenti is not a real foundation, it has indirectly acquired all that belongs to one." This point of accusation, viz., that of dwelling at Girgenti without royal authority, made an impression on the junta, and as calumnies were multiplied day by day, there was every reason to fear for the congregation.

The great contradiction we experienced in Sicily did not fail to excite Maffei and the baron to redouble their efforts. They added new complaints to their former accusations.

When Maffei saw that his scheme on the subject of mediation was disconcerted, he endeavoured to render the complaints of the people ineffectual by denouncing us as leaders of a party. He therefore addressed several petitions to the king, in which he stated that all the complaints against him were the work of the missionaries. The credit he enjoyed with the Marquis of Tanucci of course influenced that minister in his favour, and as he also accused us of other offences, he rendered all the efforts of the people of no avail, and when their delegates came to set forth their grievances, and ventured to speak of us, the minister cut them short, and said to them several times over, "Yes, I know very well that the good fathers can do what they like with you."

Our accusers published their advantages everywhere, and thus we were looked upon as if already annihilated. Our fathers were so much alarmed, that in the houses at Iliceto and St. Angelus, several nights were passed without sleeping, in the fear of being assailed and driven away by the constables.

When Alphonso saw that the fire was lit at both extremities, he felt that it was time to try and prevent a general conflagration; he therefore recalled us from Sicily. "If God wishes us to be in that kingdom," he said, "He will not

lack means of procuring our return there, and you will then return blessing God and the king." This retreat was a cause of lively distress to Mgr. Lanza. "Who cannot see the triumph of hell therein?" he said, "and it is a wretched and wicked priest who will have the glory of this victory!" He then got more animated, and exclaimed, "Well, you go away from Sicily, but you shall return there again, in spite of hell; and if it is necessary for me to sell my mitre and my cross in order to compass this end, I will sell them for God, for you, and for this work." The most respectable people of the town and of the clergy shared in their pastor's sentiments. Our brethren left Sicily then, and arrived at Naples in July, 1772. Although their departure took place secretly, and during the night, it was nevertheless the occasion of many tears and groans on the part of the people. As soon as they were informed of it, a great multitude accompanied our fathers to the shore, deploring the loss which they would be to the town, and the blank they would leave there. Immediately after the embarkation the air resounded with the cries of the crowd, who blessed the missionaries and cursed the author of their departure.

Our fathers had scarcely set out from Sicily before there was not a person in Girgenti who had not addressed petitions to the king to obtain our return thither. The clergy and all the religious orders united together for the same purpose; the chevaliers and ladies, magistrates and men of letters, all respectively presented their sup-

plications. Some pious persons at Girgenti had recourse to Alphonso to try and obtain the return of the missionaries; thirty-eight ladies in particular, and twenty-eight chevaliers expressed their sorrow at the departure of our fathers and the spiritual injury which their absence would cause: "As we have addressed an energetic petition to the king to implore his clemency," said they, "the urgency of our spiritual wants also compels us to implore your Lordship."

All these demonstrations affected Alphonso, and he said that after matters were cleared up, he would certainly give an answer.

His Lordship then dwelt much on the dangers his congregation incurred on the one hand, and believing, on the other, that his infirmities and great age rendered him of little use to his church, while he could still be of service to his sons, he resolved to resign the episcopate; but the differences which then existed between the court of Naples and that of Rome in regard to the election of bishops, made him defer taking any step in the matter, from the fear that his church would be left without a shepherd for a long time.

When the two courts had settled the matter in debate, our Saint wrote to Father Villani on the 5th of January, 1770, "I hear that the business in regard to the nomination of the bishops by the Pope is now settled, so that I wish to recommence the negociations about my resignation; but as I have already told you, I shall not propose any one else to replace me; with-

out sending in my formal resignation, I shall represent the state in which I am to the Pope, and I shall say that I wish to know what is the will of God concerning me. If he thinks fit to accept my resignation, I will immediately send it to him. But before doing anything, I wish to speak to your Reverence again, in order not to take a step of which I should afterwards have cause to repent."

After he had represented to the Pope all the reasons which led him to tender his resignation in this year, 1772, through Cardinal Castelli, he protested that he was far from wishing to do his own will, and that he meant to depend entirely on that of his Holiness, and that he was equally ready to give up the bishopric, or to die under the burthen of his office. The Pope was greatly edified by this submission to the head of the Church; but as he was aware of the very great good which the Bishop of St. Agatha still effected, he replied to him in a brief, in which he expressed himself in the most consolatory manner, in order to encourage him to continue his administration; and when Cardinal Castelli solicited the Pope to consider the old age of the saintly bishop, and to release him from this burthen, his Holiness replied to him, "that it would suffice if Don Alphonso ruled over his diocese from his bed;" and when the cardinal wanted to show him his incapacity in regard to making his visitations, the Pope answered him, "One simple prayer addressed by him to God from his bed, is worth more than if he went about his dio-

cese for a hundred years." Alphonso bent his head when he heard that the Pope's opinion was contrary to his request, and submitted his will to that of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

Our fathers seeing Alphonso in such a deplorable state that his very appearance inspired compassion, thought they ought to persuade him to make a formal resignation. Several bishops who were his friends were of the same opinion, as well as divers prudent ecclesiastics; but however feeble our saint felt for so weighty a charge, he would never consent to this. "The voice of the Pope," said he, "is to me as the voice of God, and I shall die content if by God's will I die now under the burthen of the episcopate." As they went on to urge him with reasons which seemed to authorise this step, he one day extricated himself from their instances by answering cheerfully, "The present Pope is a man who does not easily yield; if I were to give him my resignation, he would not accept it; let us be patient and wait for his successor." At this every one burst out laughing. Alphonso was nearly broken down and paralytic, while the Pope was still young and robust, and numbered seventeen years less in age. He prophesied truly however. Pope Clement XIV. contrary to all expectations, died two years after this, while Alphonso, who was old and broken down by infirmities, continued to live on and to labour.

Another reason made him afterwards renounce the idea of abdicating then, and even caused him

to expel the thought of it as a temptation. Numerous candidates aspired to succeed him in the church of St. Agatha. Now he heard that the Pope would be obliged, in order to supply his place, to yield to the efforts of a powerful party, who favoured a subject who was unfit to govern the diocese. He said on this occasion, "I would rather die the most painful death, than see my beloved sheep in the mouth of a wolf." This candidate was so bad that Mgr. Borgia, who had at first been of opinion that Alphonso ought to tender his resignation, and who had even solicited him to do it, went to him and assured him that he would be guilty of a grievous sin if he indulged in this idea any longer. As he could not go in person amongst the members of his congregation, in order to excite them to a more perfect observance of the rule, and to urge them to bear their present tribulation with patience, Alphonso addressed the following circular to all the houses of the congregation on the 1st of October:

"My very dear Brothers in Jesus Christ,

"I know that you are already aware of the great storm which agitates our congregation in consequence of the accusations our enemies have addressed to his majesty against us. But it is not these accusations which I fear, but the want of fervour which now exists amongst some of our brothers. They do not like poverty, and act as if our houses were endowed like those of the Chartreux, while it is a miracle of Providence that

each of us has a morsel of bread to eat. There is little love for obedience, little love for charity. That which has most grieved me has been to hear that some brothers have imagined that they have a claim to be allowed to preach. Is God likely to aid us when He discovers pride in us? I never heard any one of you accused of this sin before. Aspire to preach! but what profit can there be from the sermons of a subject who preaches because he has aspired to preach? Oh! never let me hear again of such things. It is a fault for which a subject deserves to be sent out of the congregation, or at least to be banished into a corner where he can never open his mouth again. Oh! let us always be united to God, and let us never do anything to displease Him, because we have no one on our side but God; but if we continue to act as we have done, God will abandon us and destroy the congregation, and I am very much afraid that this will come to pass if we do not amend. Let each one enter into himself, and endeavour to reform. If there be any one to whom the congregation and the observance of its rule is displeasing, let him leave it with the blessing of God. I am well pleased at such brothers as these going away, because infected sheep communicate the infection to the flock. It matters little if but a small number remain to us; God does not wish us to be numerous, but to be good and holy."

He then reverted to the embarrassing position in which we were, and added, "I repeat to you, the tempest rages violently. Let each one re-

commend the congregation to God, and let three litanies be said daily in common with three 'De profundis.' We stand in need of prayers, and there is no one who will aid us but the Blessed Virgin; but prayers will be of little use to us if we do not correct our faults. I can do no more, I who am very decrepid and in bed all paralysed. What should I, or could I do? It is you, my children, who must support the congregation, and be assured that if we behave properly God will always assist us, and the more poor, and despised, and persecuted we may be, the more good we shall do and the greater also will be the reward which Jesus Christ will give us in heaven. I bless you all one by one, and pray God to fill you with His holy love. Pray each of you daily to God for me, because I do so daily for each of you, my children and my brothers.

"Jesus and Mary bless you.

"Brother Alphonso Maria,

"Of the Most Holy Redeemer."

Notwithstanding all the bodily and spiritual sufferings with which he was laden, Alphonso did not lose sight of Jesus crucified, and in order to impress His sacred wounds on the hearts of the faithful, he wrote down the points of his meditations on the subject. The title of his little book on this subject is, "Reflections on Divers Spiritual Subjects." The first part contains reflections on the passion of Jesus Christ, and the second comprises divers spiritual matters for souls who wish to advance in divine love.

This work is considered by every one to be admirably adapted to win the heart of man to that of Jesus Christ. It contains a lively description of the whole passion of our Blessed Saviour, as well as of the most powerful motives to excite us to love Him. In the account which Canon Scincoli gives of it to Cardinal Sersale he expresses himself thus: "Libellum hunc quantivis pretii putaverim, Præsul amplissime, sive ad pietatem excitandam, sive ad socordiam desidiamque excutiendam, iniquissimis hisce temporibus, ubi charitas refrigescit, ubi scandala augentur, Pientissimo auctori et hoc debet ætas nostra, ut ignem et in frigidis accendat, et in fervidis augeat, opusculis suis."*

Although Alphonso had combated the unbelieving by a dissertation which was published in the year 1756, and although he had done so again and still more recently in his book, "On the Truth of the Faith," yet in consideration of the ravages they were continually making, he once more attacked them in a dissertation entitled, "Reflections on the Truth of Divine Revelation, against the opposing Principles of the Deists." This concise work is level to the comprehension of all, and also breathes of the zealous spirit of its author. "If the enemies of our religion," said he, "are never satisfied, although they fight against it by thousands of

* "How can I worthily praise a treatise so fitted to encourage the good and to awaken the tepid, in this deplorable age, when charity has grown cold, and scandals in consequence triumph?"

books, which they publish daily, why should the friends of religion get tired of defending it?" After having stated all the sophisms which the impious and unbelieving are in the habit of putting forward in order to disprove a revelation, Alphonso shows that revelation is not only useful, but necessary for man's salvation, that it is not in any degree opposed to reason, and that it contributes to the happiness of private individuals and to the tranquillity of states.

CHAPTER L.

That zeal which has for its object the glory of God, knows no bounds; it is a fire which seizes on all that can support it, in order that it may spread and propagate itself unceasingly. Although the Bishop of St. Agatha was seventy-six years of age, he was not held back, either by that or by his great infirmities, for his heart was full of zeal. He therefore undertook another work which was intended to be of use to religion, and to separate the true doctrine from the errors which had endeavoured to stifle it in former ages. In order to place all the evils which the Church has suffered before the eyes of the faithful, and to show them all the noxious things which error has at all times emitted against her, he put together in three volumes the history of all the heresies which

have existed since the birth of Christianity up to our own days. In this he particularly animadverts on the absurdities of the innovators of modern times, and shows the contradictions of their doctrine and the invariable stability of the Roman Church.

He had repeatedly, as we have already said, represented the great evils which the introduction of impious books into the kingdom had caused, to the Marquis of Tanucci, the king's prime minister, and this wise and religious minister had not been backward in taking suitable measures on this subject. The introduction of these books was prohibited several times over under very severe penalties, and transgressors were unrelentingly punished for each offence. This history of heresies was finished in 1772, and it was published under the title of "The Triumph of the Church." Alphonso dedicated it to the Marquis Tanucci, to whom he said, "I cannot do better than present this book to your Excellency, as you, together with our august sovereign, have unceasingly and zealously laboured for the good of the interests of our holy religion, by defending her against the unbelieving, and protecting her from the effects of the errors which are spread throughout their writings."

This work was received most favourably, like all the rest. "In this work," said Julius Selvaggi, "is displayed the ardent zeal of the learned author to further the interests of religion, no less among the incredulous, by setting before them the falsity of their doctrine, than amongst

the faithful, by demonstrating to them the holiness of the religion they profess."

Canon Don Joseph Simeoli, well known throughout all Italy for the extent of his knowledge, could not sufficiently read and study the Triumph of Religion, of which he said, "In hoc libro animum ac mentem religiosissimi Præsulis, veluti in tabula depictam intuitus sensi: quandoque fides, quandoque ingenium, semper pietas singulis elucet in partibus."* Alphonso was not satisfied with the use of theological arguments alone, he also added divers other proofs and particular reflections. "Ad calcem cum hereticis," says the same canon, "sive antiquis rebus, sive recentioribus congredi, consertis tum ex veterum commentariis, tum ex privata sui ipsius sententia argumentis."† The author defends the infallibility of the Pope, and his pre-eminence in the Church in a special manner in this work, and combats the errors of Jansenius and his followers in it in particular. He however met with opposers, and amongst others, Canon Simeoli was one, and as we learn by one of his letters of the 22nd of February, 1772, to the ecclesiastical examiner, Laurence Selvaggi, it was on the subject of the infallibility and supemacy of the Sovereign Pontiff. The canon,

* "I see the soul and mind of our pious bishop depicted in this book as in a picture; in each page shines forth either faith or genius, and in all there is always piety."

† "He defeats heretics whether ancient or modern by his own arguments, no less than by those with which the apologists who preceded him have supplied him."

who held the Gallican opinions strongly, did not approve of the work of Alphonso. The poor old man was much afflicted at meeting with this contradiction, and at being unable to go to Naples to defend himself. "I say what is true," he wrote to Selvaggi, "and I cannot understand from whence these difficulties proceed. If the canon will tell me what I ought to add, and what I ought to take away, he shall be obeyed. I have employed a great deal of time in refuting the false reasoning of Father Berruyer, now I see a difficulty arise where I least expected it. Tempus loquendi et tempus obediendi. If the passage which is wished to be corrected is not one of great importance, I submit implicitly to what is wanted; your Reverence can make the changes you deem needful, and I willingly consent to this, but only, I repeat, in points which are not of importance, for there are some answers to the objections which are of consequence, if your Reverence dislikes them, please to tell me of it, because at worst I can take away the objections as well as the answers. If it is the Pope's supremacy which is in question, I am ready to give my life in its defence, for if that is taken away from us the authority of the Church will be lost, I feel sure."

Another work caused him still more serious embarrassment; it was his Collection of Sermons, which he published about this same time. Mgr. Cervone, at that time the royal examiner, spoke of it in the following manner in his report to the king: "Magni nominis famæque antistes qui ante

episcopale munus divini verbi semina late fudit per felicissimi regni tui provincias, nunc Ecclesiæ inhærens suæ, ut prædicatione divini verbi Italis omnibus prodesse valeat, conciones suas typis consignat episcopus pietate doctrinaque plane insignis."*

One of Alphonso's enemies denounced this work to the authorities, as containing things which might be displeasing to the sovereign, and therefore the publication of it was hindered for nearly a year. Alphonso was grieved at not being able to go to Naples, but Mgr. Cervone, of whom we have just spoken, freed him from his difficulties. "I have been sent for to the Marquis of Marco's, who asked me if I had found anything reprehensible in this work; I told him what I thought about it, and he desired me to write down what I had told him by word of mouth." As soon as the report of the examiner became known, the intrigue was put an end to; the work was published to the satisfaction of the minister and to the glory of Alphonso; and it produced everywhere as much good as was expected from it.

Some letters are added to this book in form of an appendix. The first is written to a young student deliberating on the choice of a state of life. It places before him the great good which

* "This illustrious and celebrated prelate, who had sown the seed of the divine word before his episcopate in all the provinces of your happy kingdom, but who is now attached to his Church, this bishop, no less distinguished for his learning than for his piety, has printed his sermons in order to render his apostolical preaching useful throughout all Italy."

he may derive from the spiritual exercises made during a retreat, with the wish to profit by them. In the second, Alphonso presents the great utility of missions to a bishop, and settles all the difficulties concerning them; and in the last, which is addressed to a religious, he treats of the manner of preaching with apostolical simplicity.

As the love of novelty and the wish to be remarkable caused some of the congregation to deviate from this apostolic simplicity, and led them to display a kind of refinement of language in panegyrics, though they did not yet dare to do so during missions, his Lordship was greatly disturbed at it; and as he was told that even Father Don Louis Capuano, who was of a certain age, was among the number, he acted with prudence in the matter, and wrote to him on the 7th of September, 1773, as follows: "My dear Don Louis, my heart is pained at hearing that a far-fetched style has been introduced amongst us, and amongst others your Reverence, (if I do not mistake,) has been named to me. This makes me sad, because the example of one leads others to do the same. I comfort myself with the persuasion that your Reverence preaches in a familiar style during missions; but I fear that this polished style will pass from panegyrics into the sermons of the missions, as has happened in a certain congregation at Naples. Your Reverence must read what I have said in a letter on preaching, which is inserted into my Collection of Sermons, and also what Muratori has said on

this same subject. As to panegyrics, why should one not express oneself with simplicity in relating the virtues of a saint? Read my thirty-first sermon on Communion in my Collection of Sermons, as well as the sermons on St. Joseph, on the Annunciation, and on the Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin, at the end of the same book. When your Reverence writes a sermon, take care and avoid all high-flown expressions which are not familiar to the peasantry, or quite intelligible to them. What is the use of saying mansion instead of house, consummated instead of perfected, reaching the destination instead of arriving, summit instead of head, bestow a boon instead of pardon, bear in remembrance instead of recollect, arduous instead of difficult, couple instead of man and wife, and such-like expressions? Words of this sort, and new and affected expressions, ought to be avoided. All affectation in pronunciation must also be shunned; such vanities only give a sermon a high-flown and bombastic air. It does not do to be inelegant undoubtedly, but it is necessary to express oneself as intelligibly as possible. Segneri was a great preacher, but even he has erred in that respect; however, we only read his sermons as they are written, and as what is written is always rather more far-fetched than what is spoken, I have reason for thinking that Segneri did not deliver them as he has written them. Your Reverence has talent: when you compose a sermon, endeavour to replace choice expressions by others more in common use, and even by

words of a common and familiar sort. But I repeat what I have said before; by simply avoiding what is low, you will overcome all scruples and produce more fruit. Where a little vanity and wish to seem eloquent find entrance, God does not lend His aid. There is no need of my here repeating what I said to you in my last letter, to which I have only to refer you. Monotony must also be guarded against: I once recited a sermon in this tone before Mgr. Falcoja, in imitation of Father Cutica; but what he said to me about it has cured me of this fault for good. Even when one speaks forcibly, what is the good of employing this tone? We should preach as one should speak in a room to several people whom one wished to lead to the practice of some virtue, or to whom one was relating some event or other; then we speak without affectation and with benefit. Try to become a saint yourself, and pray for me who am on the brink of the grave."

We have also another very precious little book which the saintly bishop published at this time, under the title of "The True Happiness of Man, and on his Submission to the Will of God." One may truly say that this treatise was inspired rather than composed. A pious person was so moved by the great benefit he had himself derived from it, as to cause it to be reprinted and generously distributed it everywhere.

CHAPTER LI.

In the following year, that of 1773, God willed that though in the midst of so many troubles, Alphonso should yet see his congregation happily augmented by two new foundations in the states of Rome. Mgr. Sarni, the bishop of Aquinas, had ardently wished for our missionaries for several years, but had not yet been able to obtain them. He renewed his entreaties in March of this year; but as our fathers were then engaged, especially in Calabria, Alphonso could not promise them to him before the following November. He destined nine fathers for these missions, under the direction of Don Francis of Paul. The fruits of salvation which they produced caused them to be earnestly asked for to preach in other dioceses.

Mgr. Giacomini wanted to have them at Veroli, at Pofi, and at Castro. Mgr. Sarni obtained them for Sora and Arpino; and the pious Duke Don Gaetan Buoncompagno had them also for the inhabitants of his estates. They were called for at Vallecorso by Mgr. de Fondi. The abbot of Monte Cassino also had the satisfaction of having them in several villages which were dependant on the monastery there.

The labours of our missionaries, who were divided into two companies, were everywhere attended with the greatest success.

As Father Don Francis of Paul was informed of the prodigies which grace had wrought at Casamari, he wished to go with Father Don Laurence Neri to visit this celebrated abbey, after having terminated the mission in the little island of Sora. Our Fathers gained the affection of the virtuous Trappists by their exemplary conduct, and they joined in a plan for establishing a house of our missionaries, for the advantage of the numerous inhabitants of the neighbouring country.

A priest of Avignon had recently gone into the country of Scifelli which is not far from la Trappe, with the idea of aiding the villages in these parts where there was not even a church; he erected one, and also a commodious habitation for himself and for those with whom he hoped to be associated. As this priest was a man of God and a zealous labourer, Mgr. Giacomini, the bishop of Veroli, nominated him as his grand-vicar. It was then on this place, which was thus vacated, that the Trappists cast their eyes, and they invited our fathers to examine and see if they found it convenient.

Don John Louis Arnaud, (this was the name of the pious priest of Avignon,) received our fathers in the most cordial way possible; he inquired all about the congregation, and if he conceived a great affection for our missionaries, they conceived no less a one for him. When Fathers Francis of Paul and Laurence of Neri returned to Casamari, they said that the place pleased them, and the father prior, Don Joa-

chim Castiati, and Father Don Arsenius Smirt, promised to bring the work to a happy end. While our fathers laboured in the diocese of Aquinas, the two Trappists went to see Mgr. Giacomini, to give him an account of our institute, and of the project they were meditating. The holy bishop was filled with joy at hearing their design, and he agreed with the priest Arnaud in wishing the mission to be given at Scifelli.

This village is situated on a pleasant eminence, four miles on this side of the town of Veroli; it contains about four hundred inhabitants. At some distance from it there is another village called Candi, peopled by about two hundred souls; and a mile further on is the country called St. Francis, the inhabitants of which are divided into several hamlets, and amount to seventeen hundred. The inhabitants of all these villages are labourers; but that which was most deplorable about them was that they depended on the cathedral, and seldom were visited by any priest or monk. Mgr. de Veroli informed Alphonso of the neglected state of these souls, and easily obtained his consent for the projected foundation.

Alphonso shed tears of compassion over the sad state of these abandoned people, and looked on this project as an inspiration from on high. After he had stated the wants of these people to the holy Father Pope Clement XIV., Mgr. Giacomini obtained what he desired; he informed Alphonso of the consent of the Pope, and the foundation was decided on. "I have

consented to let this foundation be made," he wrote to Father Don Francis of Paul on the 28th of May, 1773. "I have written to thank the abbé Arnaud for it; it is to him that we are indebted for all concerning it." Alphonso was most anxious that harmony should subsist between us and Arnaud, with whom we should have to live, and he took particular pains in advising Father Francis of Paul, the future rector of the new house, to do all that he could to obtain this end. "We owe everything to him," he wrote to him, "and your Reverence, who has already done so much, must use all possible circumspection and prudence in your intercourse with him; I enforce the same thing on all. Take care not to displease him in things which are not absolutely contrary to the good order of the house. Divers things must be yielded for the sake of peace and convenience. He has conferred good on us, and may do so again. Let him see that you esteem him, and listen to his opinions as far as possible. Nevertheless, I advise you to keep up the observance of rule from the commencement of this foundation, and I beg you to do this for the love of God and your neighbour. I must once more urge on you all that I mentioned to you in my last." He said to him in another letter, "I trust to your prudence in not doing anything to pain M. Arnaud, and that all the fathers and brothers will keep up strict observance of rule."

Poverty and misery were also the portion of this new house. Alphonso did not fail to assist

it, not however with the revenues of his diocese, but with that which he received at Naples from the College of Doctors; he wished this money to be spent solely for food and clothing, and when he heard that some books had been bought with it he wrote to the superior, saying, "Is this a time to purchase books, when there is not enough to eat? It quite astonishes me. See if these books cannot be sent back, if even at some loss."

He wrote to Father Francis of Paul, on hearing that he laboured in the missions with too much ardour, even during the intense heats, saying, "Fatigues undergone in missions, during the hot weather, risk the loss of the health of more than one subject, and when they become much weakened they can no longer render any service. Therefore, for the future, I order you to stop the missions in June, or at least, at the beginning of July."

At the end of these first missions on the confines of the state of Benevento and of the kingdom of Naples, Alphonso had much cause to rejoice at the striking conversions which resulted from them, but he had also reason to be distressed at the complaints which some of the fathers made in consequence of these fatigues. As the foundation was a recent one, and in a spot with which they were unacquainted, they necessarily had much to suffer, which required a double measure of fervour in them, and all had not the dispositions to be desired in this respect. "Tell them all in my name," he wrote

to Father Francis of Paul, "to remember that this foundation is new and situated in another kingdom. In all new foundations it is necessary to suffer, and to suffer much, both on account of their poverty, and also because one has to deal with people whom one does not know. If they wish to please Jesus Christ, let them read what the saints suffered in their first establishments and how they thereby became saints."

At this period our fathers were also labouring to be established in Rome; the circumstances were favourable, and the thing could have been easily carried out, on account of the favourable dispositions of the Pope to the Bishop of St. Agatha and his holy work. But Alphonso did not approve of this project; he replied to him who had made him this proposition: "I have read your long letter, but I do not approve of your reasons; what is the good of wasting time about these things, since God does not wish for them?"

When the Jesuits were suppressed, the Pope of his own accord conceived the idea of giving us a convent in Rome. Father Francis of Paul of Frosinone, and Father Villani of Nocera, informed Alphonso of the will of the Sovereign Pontiff, and of the share which Mgr. Macedonio had taken in this project. Father Francis of Paul believed that Alphonso would at length favour his wishes, but he answered him as follows on the 25th of August, 1774: "I am rejoiced at what you tell me about Mgr. Macedonio, and

about the Pope's favourable dispositions in our regard. But we have cause to thank God that this affair has not been attended with consequences. If the Pope had persisted in such a design, I would have written energetically to him, even if I had had the whole congregation against me, to try and get him to abandon this project. What have we to do in Rome, let me ask you? The congregation would be lost, because we should be distracted from the work of our missions, and we should lose sight of the end of our institute. A bastard work would result from this, and that would be all the profit we should derive from it. There are many besides us who can do all that we have been asked to do in Rome, and in the midst of the great multitude who inhabit this town what good can we produce there? Our congregation is fitted for villages and mountains. If we are once placed in the midst of prelates, of lords, and courtly people, adieu to missions, and adieu to the country; we shall become courtiers greedy after praise and riches. May Jesus Christ deliver us from this. Finally, let us thank God for the good opinions the Pope has of us." Alphonso was as hard to please when great towns were in question, as he was ready to establish missions in villages which he saw were destitute and deprived of the bread of life. He constantly repeated to us: "It is into the cottages and cabins of shepherds that we must enter; it is there that God calls us, and it is to the service of the poor people who inhabit them that we must devote ourselves."

Father Francis of Paul wrote to him and complained with a good deal of asperity of not being freely able to give missions in several other dioceses, because Mgr. of Veroli wished to have the missionaries with him in his pastoral visitations, but Alphonso thought such lamentations out of place. "As to the missions which you cannot give this year," he replied to him, "it is a necessity to which it is needful to submit, you must obey the Pope and the bishop who command it. By making the visitation with the bishop, you may also do good, for you can remain long enough in each place to give at least a triduo and also some little mission where there has not yet been one. Arrange matters with the bishop, whom we are bound to obey next to the rule."

God blessed the labours of our missionaries in the diocese of Veroli. They gave the mission at Frosinone the following year, and the clergy as well as the gentlemen were so satisfied with it that they also tried to have us in their town. The Discalced Augustinian fathers had abandoned a church and a hospital which they had under the title of St. Mary of Grace, for upwards of four years; they were offered to our fathers, and Alphonso did not hesitate to accept the foundation. Besides a great number of little villages around, which wanted evangelical labourers, there were two other considerations which caused our saint to agree to this proposition. The first was, that in these houses there would be freedom from the persecutions

which were suffered in the others, and no obstacle there to the exact observance of the rule in all its rigour, which appeared to this man of God as a manifest sign of the divine will. In the second place, he thought that as these two houses were near to each other, they would be of mutual assistance; however we were not established there before the 20th of June, 1776.

Thus God procured our establishment in the Papal States by means of these missions. "I cannot help rendering thanks to Jesus and Mary, who have granted me so many consolations in my old age," wrote Alphonso to Father Francis of Paul. "I have had fever for four days as well as an obstinate cold; I am now better and free from fever. Praised for ever be Jesus and Mary!" Thus were the words of the Psalmist verified in Alphonso; "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, Thy comforts have given joy to my soul."*

CHAPTER LII.

THERE are certain plants which have a peculiarity which renders them very remarkable, which is, that when they produce a ripe fruit, a new one appears nearly at the same time: and in like manner did Alphonso make himself wor-

* "Secundum multitudinem dolorem meorum in corde meo, consolationes tuæ lætificaverunt animam meam." Ps. xciii. 19.

thy of admiration by his successive productions. One work had scarcely issued from the press ere another closely followed it. In spite of the distress which the continual attacks of the enemies of the congregation caused him, and in spite of the painful labours which he was obliged to undergo in order to support it, he did not lose sight of the general good of the Church. Thus, in consideration of the little profit which most people derive from the recitation of the divine office, when the Psalms are recited hurriedly, because they are not understood by the multitude, he made a translation of them into the vernacular tongue, in which he explained even the obscurest passages with great clearness.

He dedicated this book to Pope Clement XIV. in 1774. In addressing it to the holy father he said, "This is a book which I have written in the last years of my life, and at an age when my exhausted strength announces my approaching end. I have felt that I could not do better than in dedicating it to your Holiness, who is the head of the Church, and who is in the place of Jesus Christ upon earth. I hope that your Holiness will approve of this work, which may be useful to a great number of the faithful who say the divine office in a language which they do not understand; they who are ignorant of the signification of the words, and far more of the sense of the Psalms."

This work, which was a difficult one, and composed at such an advanced age, was the admiration of the most learned men at Naples.

Canon Massa, considering the ignorance of a great number of clerics, passed a eulogium on Alphonso, who had remedied it; he extols his piety, his wisdom, and his indefatigable zeal, which neither infirmities, nor age, nor the government of his church could slacken. He says that the author of this translation "explains the meaning of the Psalms, and the obscure passages in them so skilfully, that without taking away anything from the purity of the inspired word, he aids both the mind and the heart of those who read it."*

Benedict Cervone, who afterwards became bishop of Aquila, also praised this work, saying that "Alphonso by his labours has shown that he is worthy to rival the holy bishops of the primitive church, and that without speaking of the many other works by which he brought back to the road of virtue many who had wandered from it, or strengthened in goodness many who were already walking therein, had the saintly bishop not written anything else in support of religion and of the church, this work alone would have sufficed to render him worthy of immortality."†

* Occurrit pietas, sapientia, strenuus zelus,..Fractis jam pene viribus, ætate affecta, vigili pastorali cura haud præpeditus...sensus et latebras ita operit et revelat ut puritati verbi Dei nihil detrahens, intellectum etiam legentibus præbeat et cor.

† Clarissimus Alphonsus Liguorius, episcopus Agathensis, quem norunt omnes totis viribus omnique contensione, ad eas virtutes conniti, quibus veteres episcopi beatissimis Ecclesiæ temporibus floruerunt..ut christianos homines a virtute aberrantes in viam revocaret, revocatos confirmaret. Hos industria et pietate quanta maxima explicavit, ut nisi tam multa tamque utilia pro religione et Ecclesiæ disciplina tantus vir edidisset, hoc uno tamen opusculo immortalitatem promereri posset."

Alphonso added a statement of his system on the rule of moral actions to this work, in an appendix, which he also submitted to the pope for correction if any error should be found there.

While he was wholly occupied for the glory of God and for the good of souls, Baron Sarnelli and Don Maffei never rested, and left nothing undone in order to calumniate us by fresh accusations, not seeing any better method of insuring the success of their cause. "Father Carrodo has told me," Alphonso wrote to Father Villani on the 21st of April, 1774, "that the baron has been searching for things which he hopes to use against us; may Jesus Christ assist us and give us patience. I also hear that Maffei has renewed his persecutions, and that he has given vent to a fresh accusation against our fathers at Iliceto. Let us pray God to have mercy on him, and let us trust in His mercy, and that He will aid us."

Laden with infirmity and occupation as was the poor old man, he showed that he still remembered his former profession as a lawyer; he arranged his plan of defence himself. "I have got ready my answer," he wrote to Father Villani on the 2nd of June, 1774, "on the most important points. As this answer ought to be presented in writing, I will place it in the hands of the advocate Celano, in order that he may arrange it in his own way." However Alphonso was in a state of extreme uneasiness. "I have caused prayers to be said everywhere," he wrote on the 18th of December, to the same father,

who was then on a mission, "I have had masses celebrated, and I know not what more I can do. Don Celano has promised to see the ministers in order to render them favourable towards us; but the danger is great and imminent. Get the people to say an Ave before the sermon, and get prayers said in as many monasteries and places as you can. The circumstances are such, that they make me fear the ruin of the whole congregation." He thought however that the storm threatened the missionaries less than himself, its head and founder. He said in a letter to Father Majori, who resided at Naples, "When the ministers are spoken to, the congregation must not be named, I only ought to be spoken of, for I am the person principally aimed at in this affair."

While he implored the aid of Divine Providence, he did not neglect also to avail himself of that of men. He recommended the matter in writing to the counsellors of St. Clare, and got some persons of great influence to mediate with them, and specially the Prince de la Riccia. He wrote to the Marquis of Cito, at that time the president of the royal council, saying, "God has given me a feeling of confidence that your Excellency will deliver us from this persecution, and I am certain that you will be rewarded for it either in this life or in another. When I laboured for the establishment of this work, I most assuredly did not seek to obtain the title of founder; but my only wish was to do what was pleasing to God, and the experience of so many

years has already shown that I have not laboured in vain, and that our congregation has been of use by contributing to the glory of God, and I have no doubt that God has reserved a great recompense of reward for him who will assist us in our tribulations."

In these conjunctures he also solicited for an intervention in his favour with the same President Cito, and for this purpose he applied to Nicholas Vivenzio, who was a man of very great integrity, and who is at present the chief minister of the court della Sommaria. The probity of this person, his zeal, and his knowledge had already won for him the esteem of the king and of his ministers: "I particularly beg you to see Nicholas Vivenzio," Alphonso wrote to Father Majone, "and entreat him to use his influence with President Cito. A word from him to the president and to Don Liona will be worth more than a thousand from Celano or others. It is therefore necessary to be most careful in dealing with Don Vivenzio. I am full of joy, because it seems to me that the Blessed Virgin will bring us safe and sound out of this tempest. Therefore let us abandon ourselves into the hands of Jesus Christ; let us pray to Him, and He will do all for His greatest glory."

However, our saint addressed a memorial to the king, in which he without injuring any one represented the innocence of his missionaries, the labours to which they daily gave themselves up for the welfare of the kingdom, and their respectful submission to all the royal de-

cisions. He especially tried to remind the monarch of the real intentions of his father, Charles III. who if he had not meant to recognise the four houses which we had in the kingdom as communities, had nevertheless not forbidden us to live together under a head, and had allowed the missionaries to be governed according to their rule. He concluded by saying that this prince had wished that the work of the missions should be accomplished, and that all the good which was to be desired should be effected; that this end could not be attained if each member of the congregation were obliged to live on his own resources; and that if they were to be reduced to this, to view the matter on the other side, the houses would be turned into so many habitations of discord and trouble, instead of being societies of apostolical men.

On seeing the fury of our enemies and the perils of the congregation, several persons of distinction, who were interested in the public good, also began to interpose in our behalf with the prime minister. Amongst others, Mgr. Filomarino, the Bishop of Caserto, presented himself before the Marquis of Marco with tears in his eyes, and implored his protection. Mgr. Bergame, the Bishop of Gaeta, had no sooner heard of the painful circumstances in which we were, than he went to Naples in person, to see the President Cito, and the councillors Paoletti and Salomon, who were both members of the court of justice at St. Clare, and said to them, "What will become of us poor bishops if you do away

with this congregation?" We were also supported in a similar way by Mgr. Testa and Mgr. Sanseverino, the former of whom was the grand almoner, and the latter the confessor of the king.

It is easy to imagine what must have been the impressions produced on this saintly old man by such a dangerous state of things. He adored the just judgments of God, he embraced the cross, and far from feeling ill will towards those who were so obstinately set against him, he never omitted to enjoin us to pray for our enemies. In order that the congregation might merit the Divine mercies, he encouraged us to patience, and above all, to a faithful observance of the rule. He mortified himself, and excited us also to penance. He again ordered the use of the discipline in common on Mondays and Saturdays, and in order to obtain the protection of the Blessed Virgin, he enforced anew the fast of Saturday in honour of this our Holy Mother. He had recourse to the prayers of several monasteries of religious, and to those of many holy souls; he exposed our distress to the Camaldules Fathers; he sent them a great many wax candles, in order that they might expose the Blessed Sacrament, and pray for us then to Jesus Christ; he also frequently sent divers alms to the Capuchinesses at Naples for the same end. He never wrote a letter to his penitents at Naples or elsewhere, in which he did not solicit their prayers for the same intention. He especially wished that when night prayers were said in

our houses an Ave should be added for our persecutors. Above all, he insisted that our fathers at Naples should avoid all methods of defence which might appear of a suspicious kind. "I must also enforce a thing of great importance," he wrote to Father Majone, "which is, that, in seeking for patrons for our cause, we must avoid certain ladies of rank. God wishes us to have recourse to lawful means, it is on that condition only that He will protect us. Your Reverence will understand me well, without my having to enter into further details." However, he afterwards stated his sentiments on this subject in speaking to Father Corrado.

About this time he published in two volumes his book on the "Triumphs of the Martyrs." The end which he proposed in writing it was to kindle in all hearts a greater degree of love for Jesus Christ, and a greater zeal for the faith. Don Benedict Cervone could not sufficiently express his admiration for the extraordinary ardour which Alphonso therein evinced. "Alphonsus de Liguorio, episcopus Agathensis, integritate morum, intelligentia, vigilantia, liberalitate supra omnem sæculorum memoriam prædicandus, qui de gravissimo animæ negotio sollicitus, nihil eorum prætermittit quibus sibi aliisque ad cælestem patriam iter aut patefacere possit aut expedire."*

* "Alphonso Liguori, the Bishop of St. Agatha, who by the uprightness of his conduct, his learning, his vigilance, and his liberality, has rendered himself worthy of the praises of all ages, is full of solicitude for the grand affair, that of eternal salvation, and omits nothing which can open or facilitate the road to the celestial country, either to himself or to others."

CHAPTER LIII.

Alphonso, when stretched on a bed of suffering, bore it all with love; he also wished his sons to show themselves more and more worthy of their high vocation. For this end he addressed the following circular to them on the 29th of July, 1774, which manifests his zeal for the observance of the rule, and the love he bore towards his congregation:

"My very dear brothers in Jesus Christ,

"The principal thing I have to urge on you, is the love of Jesus Christ. Let us not forget the motives we have for loving Him. It is in order that we may satisfy this obligation that He elected us from all eternity, and called us into this congregation. He has also made it our duty to labour to cause Him to be loved by others. And what greater honour, what greater blessing could Jesus Christ confer on us, than that of taking us out of the world to draw us to Himself, to give us in our pilgrimage towards eternity facilities for pleasing Him in all things, and for causing Him to be loved by so many souls who through our ministry cease to sin, and are restored to the favour of God? When we go on a mission into a country, the greatest portion of the people are generally estranged from God, but ere five or six days have passed

they awaken as if from a profound sleep, and on hearing our sermons, which announce to them the mercy of God, they begin to weep over their sins, and to entertain the wish to be converted. After this, on seeing the way of pardon open before them, they begin to detest that which they have before loved, and stirred up by grace they enjoy a peace which formerly they knew not. Then they think of confessing their sins, and they renounce those passions which keep them far from God. Instead of a mass of a quarter of an hour seeming too long to them, a chaplet of five decades too tedious, and a sermon of half an hour insupportable, they now listen even to three masses with pleasure, and are not satisfied if the sermon does not last for an hour and a half or two hours. Now is it not of us that God makes use in effecting these wonderful changes, and in thus bringing hearts to find their happiness in what was before an object of disgust to them? So that when a mission ends, it leaves from two to three thousand persons loving God, who were formerly living at enmity with Him, and without the smallest anxiety to regain His favour.

"But if God has honoured us thus far, and if He has selected us to be the instruments of His glory by causing it to be loved by others, which is an honour that is never granted to any monarch on earth, what reason have we not for thankfulness towards Him, and what love do we not owe Him! If others strive to gain the title of men of merit and wit, let us endeavour to ad-

vance day by day in the love of Jesus Christ; seeking occasions of pleasing Him, and offering up to Him some mortification, or doing some action to please Him. And if we wish to grow in love to Jesus Christ day by day, let us always put ourselves in the lowest place, and take care never to wish for notice. He who hides himself the most amongst men is the most closely united to Jesus Christ, and he who only loves Him by halves and who does not strive to be as nearly united to God as possible, gives proof of great ingratitude.

"My brothers, at the hour of death, and by the light of the funeral torch, we shall see what graces the Lord has given us to enable us to preserve the high vocation He has bestowed on us. I can truly say, that I feel great compassion when I think of those brothers who once were with us, living in calm submission to obedience, united to God and contented with all that happened to them, but who are now in the midst of the world, in trouble and disquiet; they have liberty to go where they please, and to do as they please, it is true; but all they do is without rule and without fervour, and they have no more peace. They may think of prayer from time to time, but when the infidelity and ingratitude with which they have abandoned their vocation comes before their eyes, they will be filled with the pains of remorse, which will be as a worm gnawing their heart; and in order to escape such torments for the future they will gradually give up prayer, and their tepidity will go on

increasing by the efforts they will make to get free from anxiety. Their fall did not begin with grave sins, but with slight faults, by means of which the devil imperceptibly caused them to lose their vocation. I repeat it again, I feel compassion for them from the bottom of my heart, for I am certain that theirs is full of confusion, and that if their life has been a disturbed one, their death will be much more so. Several years ago I was forced to try to encourage one of these unfaithful subjects in his last moments; he was full of sorrow at the thoughts of his lost vocation, and exclaimed like a frantic person, "I am full of despair, I cannot now be saved!" The misery of those who have thus fallen ought to affect us: let us dread their fate, and prefer to suffer anything rather than the loss of vocation. The first means to be used is, to avoid trifling faults, especially those against rule. He who does not mind the rule does not care any more for the love of Jesus Christ. Experience proves that he who continues to commit a fault which is contrary to the rule with his eyes open, infallibly loses the fervour which sustained him, and the love of God becomes cold and gradually extinct within him.

"You already know that the most efficacious means for enduring contradictions is to love Jesus Christ very much, and in order to love Jesus Christ much, it is necessary to pray a great deal. To love Jesus Christ is the greatest thing we can do on earth; it is a gift which we cannot have of ourselves, but which must come from Jesus

Christ Himself, who is ready to give it to whoever asks it of Him, so that we are deprived of it only by our own negligence. For this reason the saints have always been most devoted to prayer."

The saintly author of this letter also therein predicts the prosperity of the congregation, the good which it was to effect, and the salvation which all would find in it. "I am sure," he said, "that Jesus Christ looks upon our little congregation with most loving eyes, that He loves it as the apple of His eye, as we see by experience; for in the midst of so many persecutions, He never ceases to protect us and to render us more worthy to labour for His glory in divers countries, by the assistance of His manifold graces. I shall not see it, for my death is at hand, but I feel assured that our little flock will increase more and more with time, not by becoming richer and more highly thought of by the world, but by procuring the glory of God, and that through our labours Jesus Christ will be better known and loved by others. A day will come when we shall see each other again, and when we shall be reunited all together in that eternal abode where we shall never more be separated, and where we shall also be united to hundreds of thousands of persons who once lived without love to God, and who through our means recovered grace, and who will cleave to the Lord for ever, and form our glory and joy for all eternity. Ought not this thought alone to stimulate us to love Jesus Christ with

all our hearts, and to cause others to love Him also? I bless you one and all, in the name of the adorable Trinity, and I pray Jesus Christ to augment His divine love more and more in each of those who live in the congregation, or who shall live in it hereafter, so that when we get to heaven we may be like seraphims all inflamed with love, and praise God and sing of His Divine mercy for all eternity.

"Let us never omit to recommend ourselves to our Divine Mother, in order that, through her intercession God may grant us the privilege of making His glories known everywhere. One thing gives me great comfort and great hope, and it is this, that this good Mother will never cease to take special care of each of us, and to obtain us that grace which we need in order to become saints. I must conclude, but I should like never to end from my desire to see us all inflamed with love to Jesus Christ, and worthy promoters of His glory, especially in these unhappy times when Jesus Christ is so little loved.

"I am not alarmed at poverty, nor at infirmities and persecutions; what alarms me is, the fear that some of you may some day abandon the house of God, through the temptation of some passion, and return into the world, as has been the case with so many others who formerly belonged to the congregation, and who now are without and live in trouble; for even if some of them succeed in being saved, they will certainly find that they have lost the rich crown of glory which God had prepared for them in heaven,

as a recompense for their labours had they persevered. For this reason, my beloved brothers, let us continually pray to Jesus Christ and our Blessed Mother Mary for the gift of holy perseverance, in order that God may deign to grant it to us all for His great mercy's sake. I trust each of you will specially recommend me to Jesus Christ, in order that He may grant me a happy death, which I am daily expecting. Though I am such a miserable creature, I pray several times a day for each of you; and if I am saved, as I trust I shall be, I shall not fail to pray for you in heaven also, and in a better way than I can do now.

"I have now to recommend to you, in a special manner, the observance of the exercises of each day, and of the three periods of mental prayer. He who has little love for prayer loves God but coldly. When prayer is absent, fervour is absent also, good desires are absent, and the strength to go forwards is wanting too. I also recommend spiritual reading, which is the faithful companion of prayer; I enjoin you especially to do everything with devotion and to say the divine office with deliberation.

"Do not lose the love of poverty. Remember that we live in all our houses nearly by a miracle, for you know that we have no revenues, and that the little we have is scarcely enough to allow four or five pence to each, and yet we provide for the maintenance of such a great number of brothers! For this reason, each one ought to be contented with the little he receives,

and should take it as if an alms from God. It is miraculous to see that there is bread enough for each day by day!

"I also recommend silence: where silence is absent, there is no recollectedness; where that is wanting there must be sin and trouble. One of the greatest blessings in our congregation is the advantage of silence, and he who fails in keeping silence, does injury to himself and to others.

"Let those who go on missions obey their superiors; obedience preserves good order and regularity in the exercises of the day. Even when one sees that certain things might be better regulated, it is always necessary to obey what has been commanded. Exact obedience, unmurmuring obedience, makes everything go well; God then lends His aid, the mission succeeds, and produces great fruit.

"To conclude, let each one avoid giving pain to his brothers by words or propositions which may injure charity, and take care not to enter upon any employment when on mission which his superior has not assigned to him. It is not enough to have asked for it. How can God assist a person in an office which he has entered into of his own accord? He who has such ambitious desires does not deserve to go on missions any more, and this chastisement would be justly inflicted on those who may have the audacity to wish to fill a post which has not been destined for them. It is submission that causes our missions to succeed; but I have heard with very

great pain that some of our brethren have become guilty of this grievous offence.

"Once more I bless you all, and each one in particular.

"BROTHER ALPHONSO MARIA,
"Bishop of St. Agatha.

"Arienzo, 29th July, 1774."

CHAPTER LIV.

IT is well known how grievously the Church was disquieted during the pontificate of Clement XIV. and the misfortunes which these troubles foreboded to religion; they caused Alphonso the greatest alarm, and he continually offered up prayers to Heaven for the peace of the Sovereign Pontiff and of the much-persecuted Church. No one can well imagine how he sorrowed over the storm which raged against the Jesuits on all sides; he never spoke of it without the deepest feeling of distress. "It is nothing but intrigue on the part of the Jansenists and unbelieving," said he; "if they succeed in overthowing the company, their wishes will be accomplished; and if this bulwark falls, what convulsions will there not be in Church and state! If the Jesuits are once destroyed, the Pope and the Church will be in a most disastrous situation. The Jesuits are not the only aim of the Jansenists; they aim at

the company in order thereby to be more certain of striking at the Church and state."

Such were the thoughts and fears of Alphonso; but the judgments of God are impenetrable. Clement XIV. suppressed the Society of Jesus in a brief dated the 22nd of July, 1773; this was a terrible blow to Alphonso. His face showed the sufferings of his heart, although he said nothing. When he received the brief, he adored the judgments of God which were manifested in the conduct of this Pontiff, in silence for some time; he then spoke: "The will of the Pope is the will of God!" exclaimed he; and he did not utter another word to manifest how much he suffered interiorly. One day, when I was present, the grand-vicar and other persons of distinction wished to cast blame on the dispositions of the Sovereign Pontiff. "Poor Pope," exclaimed the saintly bishop, "what could he do in the difficult circumstances in which he was placed, and when so many crowned heads united in demanding their suppression. As for us, we have only to adore the secret judgments of God and be at peace. However, I assert, that if but one single Jesuit be left in the world, he alone would be enough to establish the company."

No one is ignorant of the constantly increasing troubles in which the Pope found himself after the suppression of the Jesuits; the deplorable state of the Church and of its head filled the Bishop of St. Agatha with the deepest sorrow. "Pray for the Pope," he wrote to Father

Francis of Paul at Frosinone, on the 27th of June, 1774. "The superior of the Chinese College, who has come from Rome, told me that the Pope is overwhelmed with sadness, and in fact, he has cause to be so; for there does not seem to be a shadow of peace for the Church. Pray for the Pope; God knows how I feel for his afflictions!" "Pray for the Pope," he said once more, in another letter to Father Villani at Nocera. "For my part I never cease to do so. Pray for the Pope; I have heard from Romagna that he wishes for death, so great is his distress at all the trials which afflict the Church." "The affairs of the Church go on worse and worse," he wrote to the same father on the 12th of June; "Mgr. Rosetti, who has come from Rome, has told me things which have made me weep. The Pope is in the greatest affliction; he is constantly shut up alone; he hardly sees any one, and does no business." In another letter of the 23rd of July to Father Paul, he says to him, "The Pope suffers a great deal on account of the pretensions of the crowns, and especially on account of Venice. He is also affected by the fear of death, through the prophecy of the nun inclosed in the castle of St. Angelo, who foretold that he would die on the 16th of July. Now the 16th has passed and he is not dead; let us therefore hope that God will preserve him for the holy year of Jubilee, and for a long time after that. I do nothing but repeat over and over again, Poor Pope, poor Pope, who is tried on all sides! I pray for him,

that God may come to his aid." He added at the end of this letter, "The Pope shuts himself up continually and will hear no one. There is therefore reason to pray in a most special manner for the Pope and for the Church." On the 25th of August, he again wrote, saying, "I hear from various quarters that the Pope is in sorrow, that he is shut up and does no business. Let us pray God to deliver him from this profound melancholy." The same sentiments occur in one of his letters to the same father, dated September the 5th.

In the morning of the 21st of September, 1774, after Alphonso had ended mass, contrary to custom, he threw himself into his arm-chair; he was cast down and silent, he made no movement of any sort, never articulated a word, and said nothing to any one. He remained in this state all that day and all the following night, and during all this time he took no nourishment and did not attempt to undress. The servants on seeing the state he was in, did not know what was going to happen, and remained up and at his room door, but no one dared to enter it.

On the morning of the 22nd he had not changed his position; and no one knew what to think about it. The fact was that he was in a prolonged ecstacy. However, when the day became further advanced he rung the bell to announce that he intended to celebrate mass. This signal was not only answered to by Brother Francis Anthony, according to custom, but all the people in the house hurried to him with eager-

ness. On seeing so many people, his Lordship asked what was the matter, with an air of surprise. "What is the matter?" they replied: "you have neither spoken nor eaten anything for two days, and you ceased to give any signs of life." "That is true," replied Alphonso, "but you do not know that I have been with the Pope, who has just died." Agatha Viscardi, a servant of the Redemptoristine nuns who was present, carried this news to St. Agatha, where it was immediately spread about as well as at Arienzo where Alphonso was. But it was looked upon as a mere dream in both places. However, ere long the tidings of the death of Pope Clement XIV. were received; he passed to a better life on the 28th of September, at 7 o'clock in the morning, at the very moment when Alphonso came to himself.

Cardinal Castelli was well aware of the high reputation for sanctity possessed by Alphonso; he knew how much he was venerated for his wisdom, which was said to be inspired by God; he also knew what a great veneration the sacred college of cardinals had for the holy man; he therefore determined to ask Alphonso to write, before the conclave began, a long letter on all the abuses which ought to be reformed in the various orders of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The cardinal wished this memoral to be presented to the conclave, and that it should serve to determine the election of a Pope capable of remedying all the ills of the Church. Some people who were attached friends of Alphonso's were

commissioned to make this request to him; such an office alarmed him, but it was imposed on him by a cardinal for whom he felt great esteem. He recommended himself to God's guidance, and determined to express his opinions in a letter written on the 23rd of October, 1774, as follows:

"Most Rev. Cardinal,

"You ask for my sentiments on the present affairs of the Church and on the election of a Pope. Alas! what sentiments can I worthily express to you, I who am but a poor bishop? All I can find to say is, that it is necessary to pray and to pray much; for in order to raise the Church from the state of remissness and confusion into which all classes have fallen, prudence and human wisdom are insufficient; and in order to remedy them nothing less than the powerful arm of God will suffice. There are few among the bishops who have a true zeal for the salvation of souls. Most if not all the communities of religious are relaxed; and in the confusion which surrounds us observances are destroyed, rules are despised, and are treated as if they were not. The secular clergy are in a still worse state, so that there is an absolute necessity for a general reform among all ecclesiastics, in order afterwards to be able to reform the conduct and the manner of the laity. Therefore we must pray to Jesus Christ to give His Church a head who has something more than knowledge and human prudence, to give her one

who through the spirit of God may be filled with a great love and zeal for His glory, and who may be totally detached from all parties, so as to be able to resist the attacks of human respect. If we ever have the misfortune to have a Pope who has not God's glory alone in view, He will not assist him, and things will become worse and worse. Prayer is the sole remedy for such great misfortunes. For my part, I have not only enjoined all the houses of my congregation to pray with more than ordinary fervour for the election of a new Pontiff, but I have also ordered all the secular and regular clergy of my diocese to say the collect 'pro eligendo summo Pontifice' during mass. This is the best advice I can give you; I often pray about this election during the day myself, but what can my poor prayers avail? Nevertheless, I place all my trust in the merits of Jesus Christ and of the Blessed Virgin, and I hope that God will comfort me by letting me see the Church relieved ere I die, which my age and infirmities tell me cannot be far distant.

"I also wish to see all the disorders which exist done away with, and a thousand different ideas come into my mind on the subject which I should ardently wish to communicate to you all, if the knowledge of what I am did not take all boldness from me, by convincing me that it is not for me to wish to reform the world. I should also like the future Pope, when he has to supply any vacancies in the college of cardinals, to select only the best informed and the most

zealous among those who may be proposed to him, and that he should request all princes not to present any but men of well-known piety and learning to him as candidates for a cardinalship. I should also wish him to exercise firmness in refusing livings to those who are already sufficiently provided for in all their state can demand, to repress luxury in all the prelates, and to fix the number of their servants of all sorts, so that they should only have so many valet de chambres, so many other servants, so many horses, &c.; this would be a method of putting a stop to the slander and detraction of our enemies. He ought to take pains never to confer benefices on any but on those who have merited well for what they have done for the Church.

"I should wish him to be very strict in choosing bishops, and that he should obtain information on all hands about those who are proposed as candidates for this high and important office in the Church, and that he should be certified as to the goodness of their character and their doctrine, which are indispensable qualities in ruling over a diocese. It is on these chief pastors that the good of religion and the salvation of souls chiefly depend. I should like him to require the metropolitans and others to inform him in secret as to any bishops who are careless as to the welfare of their flocks. I should also wish him to threaten with suspension or the supervision of a vicar apostolical, both negligent bishops and those who are non-resident,

and those who scandalize the world by the luxury of their attendants, and by the excessive expense of their equipages, their festivities, &c. In some cases it does not do to be afraid of putting these threats into execution; corrections purify the Church from the corruptions which sully her, and hinder other bishops from falling further into them through the fear of public blame, which admonishes them of their backslidings; and they then hasten to return to a sense of their duty, to the great advantage of their flocks.

"In fine, why should not the future Pope be backward in granting favours which are injurious to the maintenance of discipline, such, for instance, as that of permitting nuns to leave their inclosure to enter into the world without any real necessity for it? He ought not readily to consent to the secularisation of religious, on account of the number of evils which result from it; and above all, he ought to constrain all religious whatsoever to the primitive observance of the rules of their institute, at least, in all the most important points.

"I will not tire you by saying more; I can do nothing further than to pray God to give us a pastor full of His own Spirit. And now I conclude with profound respect, and assure you that I am, &c."

While the saintly bishop was thus occupied for the well-being of the Church at large, for the administration of his own diocese, and for

the existence of the congregation, hell too did not slumber, and was on the watch for opportunities of injuring its dreaded antagonist. Up to this time the enemies of our congregation spared its head, and had only fought against its members; the veneration attached to Alphonso's name caused them to shun meeting him, in place of attacking him; but on seeing that they could not injure the members while they continued to respect the head, they turned their weapons against him too. As they could find nothing to condemn in the private life of our saint they blamed his doctrine; they published everywhere that his book on Moral Theology was full of decisions of too indulgent a nature, and above all, that it contained the lax sentiments attributed to the Jesuits. This was a sure means of producing a sensation and of exciting suspicion at that time.

After Alphonso's book had been thus denounced, the congregation became an object of suspicion, for it seemed impossible for it to escape from the taint caused by the errors of which its founder was accused. These wicked calumnies reached Naples, where there were a number of ignorant people who made a point of condemning him without however even knowing if such a theology had ever been promulgated before. But God, who kills and who brings to life, caused it to be approved by the king at the very time that his adversaries expected to see it condemned. Some copies of his Moral Theology were sent from Naples, and reached the custom-

house, where they were stopped by the Chevalier Vergas, the king's procurator-general, who was prejudiced against the work, and wished it to be examined with all possible strictness by Father Majone, a conventualist. This learned religious assured him, in his report, that the doctrine was perfectly sound, and that there was not any proposition in the work which deserved censure. "Well," exclaimed Vergas on hearing this, "to what a length iniquity has been carried! What calumnies have been spread! I am delighted and rejoiced at this news, for I regretted being obliged to pain this saintly old man." It was thus that Heaven frustrated the plots of the wicked, and turned them to the confusion of their authors, and to the glory of His servant.

CHAPTER LV.

Alphonso was kept in a state of constant and great alarm on account of his much persecuted congregation. Its enemies were powerful and inveterate, and there were many people in the kingdom, who so far from approving of new congregations, would have liked to destroy the old ones. If the suppression of the Jesuits caused communities to totter which were as distinguished as they were ancient, was there not cause to fear for those which were more recent, and which had not yet taken root?

Our persecutors, Dons Maffei and Sarnelli, were impatient for our overthrow, and did all they could in order to accelerate the coming of the day when the debates occasioned by their accusations were to be held in the royal court; and as they flattered themselves with the expectation of victory, they were continually multiplying petitions for hastening this day, which they regarded as that of our defeat.

Even Alphonso could not think of it without his courage being shaken. God generally strengthens the hearts of His servants in the midst of their sorrows, by fortifying them and causing them to trust in Him, but He also sometimes seems to absent Himself from them and to leave them to human wisdom only. Thus Alphonso, who had up to this time been full of confidence, now felt weak and without courage on seeing matters assume such an unfavourable aspect. He fancied that in order to avoid the total ruin of the congregation, the house at Iliceto must be abandoned, and the baron left in possession of the vineyard and its costs.

Our fathers had manifested a wish to come to an amicable arrangement with Sarnelli for three years, and some mediators had already laboured to manage so that he should keep the vineyard, and give us a sum of money in compensation for the pious works his brother had intended to establish; but Alphonso thought that he ought in conscience to oppose such an arrangement: "I must weigh these matters well," he wrote to Father Majone, who was at Naples, on

the 4th of December, 1774. "If this conciliatory plan should ever be acted on, I shall have to consult the learned and those versed in spiritual matters, in order to put my conscience at rest about it. We shall see what answer the baron will give, and then we can speak." He gave the same reply to Father Don Matthias Corrado: "I am not at liberty to do what I please, for my hands are tied. In case I were to have to give up the vineyard to the baron, in return for the equivalent indemnity of four hundred ducats, my conscience would become uneasy, for I should have interpreted Don Andrew's wishes. If the project is ever likely to be executed, I must consult both advocates and theologians, in order to see whether I can do it or not."

Things assumed a more and more gloomy aspect, and Alphonso wrote to Father Villani on the 18th of December, saying, "We are undergoing a great storm here on account of this affair with Sarnelli. I have got the opinion of all the counsellors who were capable of deciding on this point, because I do not wish to decide alone as to the necessity of abandoning the house at Iliceto, and of giving up the vineyard, as we have spoken of doing in favour of the baron. I repeat that the circumstances are such as to make me apprehend the ruin of the whole congregation. One maxim is certain:—it is better to lose an arm than to risk the loss of the whole body. I have had prayers offered up in all directions; I have had masses said, and I know not what more to do. Pains have also been

taken to draw up petitions; the Advocate Celano takes care to inform the ministers of the state of things, but the danger is great and imminent." As Father Villani was on a mission at this time, he told him to recite an Ave Maria to the people before the sermon, with the view of obtaining the Blessed Virgin's protection in this critical conjuncture, and he enjoined him to ask some monasteries to offer up the same prayer for this intention. All the houses of the congregation shared in the apprehensions which tormented that of Iliceto. In order to restore our courage and incite us all to confidence, he wrote to Father Don Francis of Paul at Frosinone, on the 3rd of October, 1774, "Let us behave as we ought, and Jesus Christ will protect us. This is of great importance, for if we commit faults God will abandon us. In any event we shall be able to take refuge at St. Cecilia and at Benevento." He referred to the houses of Scifeli and St. Angelo de Cupoli. On the 4th of February of the following year, 1775, he again wrote to the same father, saying, "God, who made the congregation, will know how to preserve it, but if we commit faults, we expose ourselves to the risk of being turned out of our houses, which will then not fail to be destroyed; and then we must return to that world which we quitted with joy. Frequently set before all the brothers the dangers in which we are, in order that each of them may be attentive in the observance of the rule, and in obedience to the superiors. We are in the hands of God and in continual risk

of being dispersed. Prayers alone can save us; and that which makes me tremble, is to hear that faults are committed amongst us."

Alphonso's alarm increased as the storm became more violent. He wrote to Father Villani on the 20th of March, 1775, as follows: "I have not received any tidings from Naples, whether for good or for evil, for several days. I have been afraid of some other commotion depriving me of my intellects, as I have been in danger of it lately, but thank God I am much better to-day. I am greatly alarmed at the idea of the possible suppression of our houses, and this thought is unceasingly present to my mind. I have not written to any one, and I do not wish to do anything more of myself. Consult together, and come and see me as soon as possible, for when the case is once begun, our fate will be speedily settled. Reflect on it all; our affairs are in a very critical state, for the whole congregation is involved in this affair, and its fate will, it is believed, depend on the sentence which may be given by the judges. We have a great deal of trouble with N. N., who glories in trying to destroy us. The Marquis of Tanucci inspires more fear than all the rest, that is to say, if the circumstances you are aware of be true; so that it will not do to fall into a state of fancied security, in the midst of such imminent danger. Think it well over, consult over it together, and write to me of all the divers opinions which will be delivered; make haste and let me know all

about it before the court have delivered their sentence." The famous advocate, Don Paul Sarnelli, who was a relation of the baron's, interposed in our favour, with the idea of being able to effect some amicable arrangement, but in vain. The baron, who believed himself sure of the victory, wanted to enter into possession of the property without being obliged to give an account of the charitable intentions of his brother's will.

On seeing the obstinacy of Sarnelli, divers bishops and magistrates, and in particular Mgr. Borgia, Mgr. San Severino the king's confessor, and Mgr. Testa, the grand almoner, Councillor Avena and the president of the council Don Balthasar Cito, as well as many others, wished us to abandon ourselves into the hands of God. Our members, and especially Father Villani, begged Alphonso to go and cast himself personally at the feet of the king. He replied to them with a smile: "What a figure I should cut before the king in my present state! would he not take me for a phantom, and order me out of his presence? My brothers, let us place ourselves in God's hands, and let us not trust in human means, for the congregation is a divine work, and not the work of man, who is incapable of supporting it." Our enemies succeeded in fixing the opening of the debates in the royal court for the 24th of December. But while they endeavoured to move heaven and earth in order to injure us, Alphonso on his side did not neglect anything with God in order to obtain His mercy.

The celebration of masses, the prayers of pious souls, alms—all was done in order to escape the shipwreck, which so formidable a tempest threatened. By his order the Blessed Sacrament was exposed in all the houses, and the Psalm Qui habitat was recited in common in the church, together with an Ave to the Blessed Virgin for our persecutors.

Another cause of trouble arose, which was unlooked for. As we kept on the defensive the attacks of the accusation were immediately warded off by our council. His Lordship and all our fathers feared as to the way in which the august tribunal would receive the objections of our adversaries, and they on their side began to fear that all the plot which they had contrived would be broken, and that the truth would thus be manifested to the sight of the wise councillors. They therefore thought of a fresh contrivance, and, who can believe it? by means of a protector who supported them with the ministers, they managed so that the end of the debate should not take place before the royal council; and that the papers containing the complaints and wrongs, or rather the calumnies of our adversaries, should pass through the hands of the commissioner, Ferdinand de Leo, who was first to make himself acquainted with their contents, and then to make his report of them to the royal court. All Naples were astonished at such proceedings. There is no need for my repeating how much we dreaded fatal consequences from such a blow. The commissioner took away all

hope from us; for he was an enemy to all new monasteries in the kingdom as well as new institutes, and indeed he could scarcely bear the ancient ones. And from some things he had dropped, we could already conjecture how unfavourable his report of us would be. But we shall speak of this in the following book, in its proper place.

As the congregation was in imminent danger of being destroyed, Alphonso was advised to write to Naples in order to gain the patronage of a lady who had great influence with the procurator; but as he entertained some fears that God might be displeased at it, he replied as follows to Father Majone: "I will never do such a thing; let the congregation be destroyed rather than become the occasion for even the shadow of any sin." We have already said that he recommended nothing but prayers, penance, and observance of rule in all the houses. "That alone," he repeated, "and a very great confidence in Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin, can be of assistance to us, and can draw down the Divine mercy on us. I am also of opinion that human means are necessary; but the shield of the protection of God is that which is of most power in defending us from the blows of our enemies. Let us rest assured of this protection, at least unless we render ourselves unworthy of it by our own fault."

Happily we were looked on more favourably by the ministry of grace and justice. The tears of the just are never shed in vain, and the Lord,

who never permits them to be persecuted except to show forth His mercy and His glory more brightly, also comforted Alphonso in the midst of these trying circumstances. The inhabitants of Girgenti had never ceased to petition for our return into Sicily, as we have already seen. The Prince of Trabbia amongst others, who enjoyed the king's favour, which he had so justly merited, did not forget to intercede for us with his majesty through the medium of his brother the bishop. Alphonso heard of these favourable dispositions in our regard in Sicily as early as in November; he returned thanks for them to God. "There is good news at Naples about the affairs of Girgenti," he wrote to Father Villani, "which have given me great consolation, because a great deal of good has been done in that country, and still more will be effected after this last tempest. Let God's glory alone be before our eyes. May God's will be done, and then let us die if it be necessary." As the king knew the purity of our intentions, and the great good we had done in so many parts of Sicily, he did not hesitate in giving a favourable hearing to all these representations, and in permitting us to return to this island. The decree was made known by the Marquis of Marco on the 3rd of December, 1774. Our enemies on seeing their wishes thus defeated put an end to their intrigues, and Alphonso, in concert with the bishops, decided on the return of the missionaries, whose departure however did not take place until the month of April, 1775.

In order to render the entrance of our fathers

into Girgenti as glorious as possible, Mgr. Lanza wanted them to stop at Aragone, which was a place about three miles from the town, and that they should be there met by a brilliant suite of carriages and a retinue of ecclesiastics and gentlemen; but our fathers did not approve of such display. However, although they did not announce the time of their arrival, several carriages and persons of distinction came to meet them.

On arriving at Girgenti they were received at the gates of the town by the clergy and the citizens who were perfectly delighted to see them. When Mgr. Lanza saw our fathers again, he could not help exclaiming with the holy old Simeon of the Gospel, "Now dost Thou dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy words in peace; because mine eyes have seen Thy salvation!" And on the 23rd of this same month of May, this zealous prelate, so worthy of immortal memory, fell asleep in the arms of the missionaries, that he might go and enter into eternal rest, and receive from God in heaven the reward which he had merited by his great solicitude and zeal, especially in regard to the work of the missions.

It is easy to imagine what sorrow we, as well as Alphonso, felt for the loss of so worthy a protector, especially in the circumstances in which we were placed. However, we found another protector, and one no less full of zeal and love for our congregation, in his Eminence Cardinal Branciforti, who succeeded him in February of the following year, 1776. After this prelate we

must not forget to mention Don Dominic Spota, grand-chanter of the cathedral, Don Liborius, canon of Amico, and Mgr. Papé, who was afterwards Bishop of Mazzara, and at that time the very estimable Dean of the cathedral of Girgenti; all these persons were the protectors of our houses in Sicily.

CHAPTER LVI.

We have nearly reached the termination of Alphonso's episcopate, but before we speak of his farewell to his church, I think it right not to omit various particulars which manifest his zeal during his government.

As the clergy were the portion of his flock which he held dearest, he was most anxious to make it edifying and worthy of the sacred ministry. He followed St. Paul's precept literally, and was instant in season and out of season, he reproved, he entreated, he threatened, without ever being wearied in bearing with them and instructing them.* Father Caputo thus describes the conduct of this holy bishop: "His Lordship's first reproof was full of sweetness and humility; if he saw no amendment he gave a second reprimand of mingled sweetness and severity. If after this he found that the person was incorrigible, chastisement soon followed, and in such a case if

* Insta opportune, importune: argue, obsecra; increpa in omni patientia et doctrina. 2 Timothy, iv. 2.

the king and the Pope had wished to interpose in his favour, they would have met with a refusal."

Amongst all the sins which were committed in his diocese, drunkenness and incontinence were those which he abhorred the most. "It was a great scandal in his eyes," said the Archpriest Rainone, "if an ecclesiastic entered into a cellar or a tavern in a country place even, but still more so if it happened in a town. He said that the drunkard is not a man, but a brute; that one can even expect more from the brute than from the drunkard; and he looked upon drunkenness as the source of the most infamous vices." He was not satisfied with imprisoning those who were addicted to it; he also sent them for several months to one of our houses at Naples, or to that of the fathers of the mission. He was not satisfied with an ecclesiastic who merely abstained from frequenting taverns and practised the exercises of meditation; he looked for nothing good from one who yielded to the love of drink in private. This passion was in his eyes a complete dishonour to a minister of the Church.

A priest of this description came to him one day at the commencement of his episcopate; he asked him who he was; the priest replied that he was at the head of the Annunziata. Alphonso who knew him replied quickly, "No, you are not at the head, you have no head." He then set the fatal effects of wine before his eyes, and reprimanded him with as much strength as sweetness. He was eager to see his clergy completely free from this vice, and he not only

enjoined the episcopal vicars to be vigilant, and to seize those who went to public-houses in the very fact, but he also charged the syndics of each village with the same office. Don Thomas Briganti, a gentleman of Franca-Villa, a syndic and judge in the territory of Real-Valle, informed him of several abuses of this kind which were of no rare occurrence in this place, and received the following answer: "I have read your excellent letter with great pleasure; thank you for it; and when you find any priests or other ecclesiastics in taverns of an evening, I beg that you will have them conveyed to my house; by this means they may be amended." In another letter to the same person he said, "When the officers have taken up any ecclesiastic, please to let him be brought to St. Agatha, where there are prisons." This same gentleman wrote to me, that when his Lordship heard of a priest of Real-Valle, who was in the habit of frequenting public-houses, he addressed the most urgent entreaties to him in order to cause him to return to the path of duty. As the warning was unsuccessful, he caused him to be imprisoned, and gave him up to the care of his grand-vicar.

A priest of Frasso passed days and nights in taverns, abandoning himself to drunkenness in company with the lowest amongst the populace; and what is scarcely credible, he never omitted to be at the altar every morning. One day when this miserable being was drunk, he forgot himself so far as to lose respect towards the magistrate, who shut him up in prison. Not satisfied

with this punishment, the bishop pronounced a sentence of interdiction against him for several months, and commanded him to remain in a religious house during that time.

Alphonso had an equal abomination for the vice of impurity. He was in the habit of saying, that he saw no difference between a sow which wallows in the mire, and a man who is addicted to this sin. I have heard from Archdeacon Rainone, that all kinds of crimes, even that of homicide, found mercy from his Lordship, who said on these sad occasions, "Do we know how he came to do that? We must have pity on the unhappy man." But when he heard of any act of licentiousness, especially if it concerned a priest or monk, he lost all rest, and pursued the culprit without mercy. However, he knew how to make a distinction between frailty and malice. He compassionated him who had made a false step through weakness, but he could not put up with him who was the voluntary and obstinate slave of passion. He had always salutary remedies at hand for the first, and did not recur to very severe measures with them; his principal mode of causing them to think seriously was the spiritual exercises. But when he saw that the vice had taken root, he did not make any compromise, but used the strongest methods for destroying the evil. One day he said in an agitated tone to Don Nicholas Ranucci, the chaplain at Naples, "If a priest falls from grace, I must give an account of it;" and as he tried to tranquillise him, his Lordship replied in a feeling tone, "It is I, my dear

Nicholas, and no one else, who must render an account of it to God." Don Agnello Sgambato, procurator of the parish of St. Agnes, has told me that Alphonso did not know what more to do in order to cure one of these miserable men, so he sent for him to speak to him, but before admitting him, he took care to place his large crucifix on the ground at the entrance of his room. On seeing this, the wretched man was seized with terror and wanted to draw back. "No," said his Lordship to him; "enter and trample it underfoot, it would not perhaps be the first time." He then gave free vent to the ardour of his zeal, and set before him the enormity of his sin. The priest was full of confusion and repentance; he burst out sobbing, and promised to amend; and the same Sgambato assured me that he was as good as his word.

When he had exhausted mild measures in trying to deliver some ecclesiastic from this passion in vain, his ordinary remedies were exile and suspension: exile in order to break through the attachment, and suspension, to avenge the dignity of the sacred ministry.

Alphonso had caused a priest of the village of Luzzano to be imprisoned on account of his scandalous conduct. He made him go through the exercises of a retreat, without the unfortunate being deriving the least benefit from them; the bishop then sentenced him to exile for six years. Another on whom imprisonment and other chastisements had proved inefficacious, was obliged to undergo a banishment of ten years, and he died out of the diocese. A third priest

whom reiterated reprimands had not been able to extricate from his shameful passions, was put into prison, but he succeeded in escaping, and carried a large padlock off with him, which served to fasten his prison door. On hearing of this flight, the good bishop was not angry at this man having freed the diocese from so bad a priest, but he regretted the loss of the padlock, which he was obliged to replace. This priest sentenced himself to a voluntary exile, and never returned to St. Agatha whilst Alphonso was its bishop.

No personal considerations were able to move him when this shameful vice was in question. I will give an instance of the firmness with which he opposed it. There was a priest in a village in the neighbourhood of St. Agatha who lived in open sin: Alphonso immediately resolved to deprive him of his parish, and to strike a blow by which all the clergy might profit. "Quis custodit custodem?"* said he on this occasion. He would have done it without showing any mercy; but some prudent people represented to him, that he would increase the evil by a public punishment. This argument did not convince the prelate, and he remained inflexible, when at length the priest became alarmed, and came to him giving proofs of repentance and amendment, by which means he obtained forgiveness, although with difficulty; he proved that he was worthy of it, however, by his after conduct, and his example produced the most salutary effects.

"Who can keep the keeper?"

The rigorous bishop had recourse to the secular power in regard to priests who were thus depraved, that is to say, if those who were its depositaries were prudent persons and feared God. "He frequently counselled me to exercise constant watchfulness," said the syndic Briganti, "in order to prevent any priest from rendering himself guilty of any action unworthy of the holy ministry. Above all, he advised me to be most zealous in hindering any one from having any suspicious connexions; and when I told him what I had done in order to put a stop to profligacy, his reply showed how much satisfaction it had given him. Those whom I thus succeeded in thwarting or hindering in their dissipation were not few in number, and this servant of God always let me see how much he was pleased with my conduct." If he could punish them and obtain the mastery over them more surely by it, he never stopped short at any expense, as the grand-vicar Rubini has testified. He had several commissioners in his service for this purpose, and he also made use of soldiers, to whom he gave large recompenses. Brother Francis Anthony has related that each imprisonment cost him five or six ducats. By means of this severity, he struck terror into the hearts of all bad priests, and whether through a love for virtue, or through the fear of punishment, sin either disappeared or hid itself in obscurity.

While he was on a mission at Arienzo, he was informed that a priest of la Cerra frequented a dangerous house; he immediately hasten-

ed to order the soldiers to seize him during the night, and he caused him to be conducted to his bishop under a strong guard.

He who was once exiled for such a cause could never more hope for his favour. There was a priest whom he had forbidden to frequent a certain village, who had business which compelled him to return to it; Alphonso granted him leave to go there for ten days, but on finding that he exceeded this period, and that he frequented a suspicious house, he immediately wrote to the episcopal vicar, on the 23rd of February, 1775: "Let this priest know that he must set out instantly," said he, "or I will send people to imprison him; tell me if he obeys." This wretched man wished to take advantage of an amnesty, which had been issued by the king. "This pardon is not applicable to him," wrote his Lordship. "He must therefore either go away of his own accord, or I will prosecute him by virtue of a warrant I have obtained against him." His severity in regard to the refractory was so well known, that it soon was a commonly received opinion in the diocese, that if one of these dissolute priests had begun to be an object of the bishop's watchful observation, there was no further chance of rest for him unless he gave clear proofs of amendment. At times, however, the prelate seemed resolved to leave things alone; but it soon became noticed that this was a fatal omen for those who were the objects of this toleration. On his first visit to Frasso he met with a priest of bad character; he warned him in a paternal

manner, but when he saw that he fell back into sin again, he had him shut up in the prisons of St. Agatha: even after this chastisement, the miserable creature did not amend: "Let him alone," he said to the episcopal vicar, "God's justice will reach him." He was carried off by sudden death some time afterwards, although he was in the prime of life.

Even when he exercised the greatest severity his Lordship never lost sight of the spirit of charity, and while he gave free course to his zeal, he did not forget the mercy which should animate the Christian. A priest who had been sentenced by the chapter to pay a fine of four ducats, stated to him what trouble he had gone through in coming to St. Agatha, as well as what expenses this sojourn away from his home had occasioned him, and begged him to release him from the fine of four ducats; his Lordship gave him twenty carlines, and told him to give the balance to the poor. When the priest had gone Father Buonapane, who had been present, disapproved of what Alphonso had done, and said that it would have been better to make him pay the whole fine and give it to the poor: "It is necessary to punish the guilty," his Lordship answered him, "but they should be dismissed with mildness, in order to be able to correct them the better."

His commiseration was increased if sin were united to misery; in these cases it was not the fine, but amendment which he sought; he even sometimes gave money to them. He once sent for a priest of the village of Cervino, whose con-

duct scandalised the inhabitants; he kept him for a fortnight in his palace, after which he sent him to our house at St. Angelo at his own expense. A poor priest of the village of Forchia was also kept for a long while in the house at Ciorani, and supported at the cost of the bishop. The same course was pursued towards a great many others.

In certain ecclesiastical tribunals, when a priest is degraded and sentenced to banishment, his poverty does not exempt him from being deprived of his dues; but he preserves the power of saying mass, as if such an one were not totally unworthy to ascend the steps of the altar. The bishop of St. Agatha, on the contrary, forbade them to celebrate the holy sacrifice, but in order to compensate for the loss of their fees, he granted them an adequate indemnification out of his revenue; and when, after the lapse of a certain time, he thought them in a right state of mind again he sent them their pardon. Don Joseph Sparano, a canon of the cathedral at Naples, could not help greatly admiring such zeal and charity, and expresses himself thus regarding it: "Such disinterestedness is truly singular, and perhaps not to be met with in any other modern bishop." Canon Verzella told me that two of these priests who were suspended and banished out of the diocese, received ninepence a day for their maintenance from Alphonso. This assistance was bestowed on them on account of their poverty.

A priest who had once already suffered imprisonment, was again condemned to exile, and

complained of such rigour. "My son," said Alphonso to him, "have I then acted thus through anger? You have yourself constrained me to it. Amend, and then take my life's blood if you will; I am ready to do anything for you." He frequently forgot his character as judge, and became the advocate for the guilty. One of them had been incarcerated for a considerable time, and the grand-vicar wanted to prolong his detention. The bishop was moved with compassion towards him; he himself asked that he should be set free, and that the length of his sojourn in prison should be taken into consideration.

His inflexibility towards those who remained obstinate in their sin, changed into mercy, when he saw that they repented. He had an admirable degree of charity for those whom he had reproved and who gave proof of real amendment. Father Caputo affirmed the same thing. He received them to his arms with all the tenderness of a father, and forgetting their misconduct never spoke to them more of the sorrow they had caused him.

A person was led by envy to denounce a priest of Mojano to the king and the bishop of St. Agatha, accusing him amongst other crimes of criminal intercourse with a lady of rank; when the unfortunate man found himself thus pursued, and being conscious of not being irreproachable, he began to think seriously; he went to his Lordship, humbled himself before him, confessed his fault, and promised to correct it. Alphonso was so pleased at this that he not only put an end to all proceedings against

him in the ecclesiastical court, but he undertook to defend him before the king; and not even thinking this enough, he sent for his accuser, and succeeded in softening his severity and reconciled him with the priest. This latter was constant in his good resolutions, and his Lordship never ceased to look on him with kindness.

He heard that a priest belonging to a noble and most distinguished family, lived in a scandalous way; he sent three times for him, but he did not deign to give any satisfaction. When Alphonso saw his obstinacy, he ordered his grand-vicar to prepare the cause, and told his secretary that should this priest come to speak to him at a future period, he must not show him in to him, but send him to the grand-vicar. Some time afterwards the culprit heard what was being done in his regard, and not being able to bear to see his name figuring in the courts of justice, he got into his carriage and proceeded to his Lordship with all possible expedition. On finding that he was refused admittance to Alphonso, he made the antechamber resound with his vociferations. His Lordship was at the time making his meditation in bed, where he was confined by illness; not knowing from whence all the noise proceeded, he sent for his secretary, in order to tell him to take care and have silence kept, but at the same moment the priest entered after the secretary; his Lordship on seeing him immediately told him to go to his grand-vicar, but the gentleman fell on his knees at the foot of his bed. "I do not know the vicar Rubini, "he said to him, "but I acknowledge Mgr. Liguori

as my father." At these words Alphonso became affected. "My son," he said to him, "I sent for you and you did not come; I was obliged to place you in the arms of justice; you know what scandal you have given." The culprit was ashamed, and began to shed tears. "It is true," said he, "that I made this acquaintance eight months ago; I have done wrong, and I confess it; I have fallen three times, and I should have done so oftener still had I had the opportunity. There is my confession; now do whatever you please with me." "Since you acknowledge your fault," said Alphonso to him, "and confess the truth to me, I leave you to choose your penance yourself." So much goodness completed the priest's confusion, who answered with sobs, "I choose the house at St. Angelo de Cupoli for my place of retirement, and only when God tells me that He has forgiven me then only will I depart from it." His Lordship on seeing that his repentance was sincere, sent for the papers connected with his suit, and said to him while tearing them, "My son, may God do the same in heaven." Father Caputo, the priest Don Francis Ferrara and the priest Don Clement Crisci, who were present, were all three filled with admiration at such excessive charity. The priest went to St. Angelo, he remained there for a month, and was afterwards a subject of edification to all his country.

Impurity and drunkenness were the two vices of which his Lordship had the greatest horror; but he was equally an enemy to every other sort of irregularity on the part of his priests, in whom

the slightest fault was a considerable sin in his eyes. Thus he severely reprimanded a priest who went out to buy something in the public square, being negligently dressed in the clothes he had had on in his house. On another occasion again, it was in the October of 1768, when the bishop was ill, a priest of Airola took a part in the representation of a play. Alphonso ordered him to go to his grand-vicar at St. Agatha, but the culprit suspected what was the cause of this, and not only did not obey, but even acted a second time. He relied very much on the protection of the prince, in whose palace the play was performed. His Lordship, whose sufferings did not put a stop to his zeal, had the prince spoken to, and told from him, "This sort of thing cannot be tolerated. This priest has deserved a severe punishment on account of the scandal he has given by appearing on the stage in the evening, and at the altar in the morning; however as the comedy took place in your Excellency's palace, I have wished to inform you before inflicting punishment, on account of the respect I feel for you, with the assurance that your piety would not wish such an abuse to remain unpunished." It was with difficulty that he consented that the penance should only be the interdiction of saying mass for fifteen days, and he ordered that during that time the suspended priest should be in retirement at St. Agatha.

His Lordship was not ignorant of the transgressions which are committed under cover of distance, when people believe themselves sheltered

from all inspection, so he took care to be informed as to the conduct of the priests, not only of his own diocese, but also as to those who were in the villages or adjacent estates. Thus in order to know what they did in the country of Paolisi, he had recourse to the archpriest Gallo, as well as to the parish priests of Maddalon, of Caserto, of la Cerra, of Cerreto and elsewhere. On the culprits finding themselves thus reproved without being able to discover how Alphonso had been informed as to their conduct, they exclaimed, "It is either an angel or a devil who betrays us and tells him of everything!"

"By this indefatigable zeal," said Canon Rubini, "and by the assistance of Divine grace, His Lordship succeeded in doing away with a great number of scandals amongst the priests of the diocese, and he insensibly worked a seasonable reform among the clergy." A gentleman of Maddalon on hearing that his Lordship was seriously ill and in danger of death, replied to those who announced these sad things to him, "St. Agatha will lose a great deal if Mgr. Liguori dies. Who cannot see what regularity his zeal has succeeded in establishing amongst so many priests who formerly lived in a state of the most deplorable licentiousness?"

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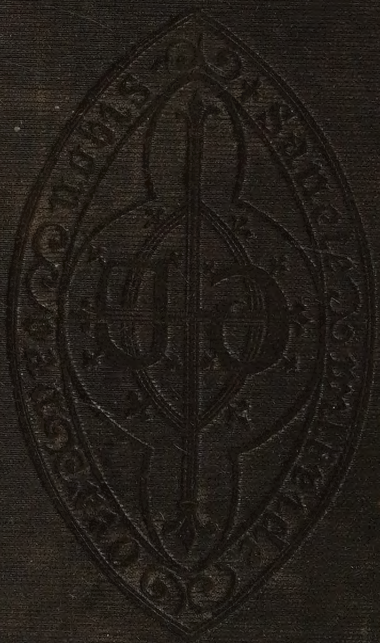
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Life of St. Alphonso Maria
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